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ABSTRACT

The Volunteers in Service to America (VISTA) Summer Associates program enabled 708 people to work full time in low-income areas with 33 existing VISTA sponsors throughout the country for 8-10 weeks in direct service roles performing counseling, tutoring, community outreach, office work, surveys, and home construction. Associates served an average of 9 weeks and received subsistence allowances averaging \$620 per month; 97% completed their tour of service. The program was evaluated by analyzing data collected from 1- to 3-day site visits at 14 projects and data from questionnaires completed by 719 associates upon entering and 513 who completed the program (a 75% return rate), 94 questionnaires completed by VISTA volunteers working with the associates (a 47% return rate), and 120 questionnaires completed by project and site supervisors (a 78% return rate). According to the evaluation, the summer associates completed an average of 89% of their objectives and tasks. Sponsors, site supervisors, and summer associates were all positive about the program and felt it should be continued next year. The associates benefited from their service and simultaneously expanded the capacity of nonprofit and public sponsors to provide service to low-income communities. (28 tables/figures) (MN)

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November 1993



# An Evaluation Report on the Volunteers in Service to America Summer Associates Program

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**AN EVALUATION REPORT ON THE  
VOLUNTEERS IN SERVICE TO AMERICA  
SUMMER ASSOCIATES PROGRAM**

Corporation for National and Community Service  
**ACTION**

Office of Policy, Research and Evaluation  
Program Analysis and Evaluation Division  
1100 Vermont Avenue, N.W.  
Washington, DC 20525

November 1993

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

### THE VISTA SUMMER ASSOCIATES PROGRAM

The Volunteers in Service to America (VISTA) Summer Associates Program was part of the 1993 Summer of Service national service demonstration initiative of the Clinton Administration. The program enabled 708 Americans to work full-time with 33 existing VISTA sponsors across the country for eight to ten weeks in low-income areas. The majority worked in direct service roles performing counseling, tutoring, community outreach, office work, surveys and construction functions. Some worked in indirect roles performing tasks such as developing new programs, recruiting clients, raising funds, and public relations.

The Associates served an average of nine weeks. They received a subsistence allowance averaging \$620 per month. Ninety-seven percent completed their tour of service. The total direct cost of the program was \$1.2 million. The cost per Summer Associate was \$1,705.

Twenty-six or 79 percent of the sponsors were private non-profit organizations and the remainder were public agencies. They addressed health and human needs, education, public safety and environmental issues. The sponsors used a variety of organizational approaches including single sites, single sponsors with multiple sites, umbrella organizations with multiple sites and statewide programs. Each had its advantages, but no one approach appeared more or less successful than another. Each was unique to the sponsoring organization and local conditions. Success and problems were more related to individual sponsors, sites and project objectives than the organizational approach.

### THE SUMMER ASSOCIATES AND THEIR ACTIVITIES

Sixty-six percent of the Summer Associates were female. Sixty-three percent were minority. Fifty-five percent had some college education and 22 percent were college graduates. The median age was 22 years. Fifty-eight percent lived in the communities in which they served and almost a fourth of the Associates had a prior association with the project's sponsoring organization. About one third were from households with incomes less than \$10,000, a third were from households between \$10,000 and \$35,000 and a third were from households with incomes greater than \$35,000. Sixty-one percent were students when they applied for the program.

They served an average of 40 hours each week, primarily in one of four activities: community outreach (public education/canvassing neighborhoods/flyer distribution) (23.6%), working with children (19.9%), general office work (18.5%) and house construction (14.4%). Most Associates performed two or more activities.

## Executive Summary

More than half (58%) of the program's beneficiaries were female. More than half (54%) were African-American. About a quarter (23%) were Hispanic and one-fifth were White. About half (52%) were younger than 18 years. About a third (34%) were age 10 or younger. Almost three-quarters (73%) were at or below the poverty level. Almost all the projects (97%) served low-income persons.

## PROGRAM OPERATIONS

The VISTA program structure of established non-profit and public sponsors enabled VISTA to plan and carry out a complex new program with little lead time. Even with this advantage, sponsors, supervisors and state program staff felt that more lead time was needed to properly plan and implement a summer program. Management of the influx of Associates in such a short period of time demanded considerable attention on their part. Also, Associates and supervisors indicated that eight weeks was too short a period of time for the program.

Recruiting methods varied considerably from site to site with varying degrees of success. Recruiting a broad age range of Summer Associates provided a mix of maturity as well as enthusiasm for supporting site supervisors.

Training was an area that needed greater attention. In the majority of the sites visited, there was limited training beyond that of the initial pre-service orientation.

The Associates worked in large and small teams as well as individual assignments. Since clusters of Associates were assigned to projects, the Associates frequently worked in teams to accomplish their tasks. Working in teams appeared to have a positive effect on the Associates, bringing out the better elements of individuals working together to accomplish a common goal. Teams of two to three worked well in projects, as did groups of four to six. Teams larger than this appeared unwieldy and less amenable to completing their tasks.

Some supervisors expressed a need for more information and clarification on how to handle disciplinary problems, reassignment, or termination of Summer Associates. Many supervisors and state office staff suggested that a Summer Associates Handbook be developed for Associates and project supervisors.

## ACCOMPLISHMENTS AND OUTCOMES

The Summer Associates completed an average of 89% of their objectives and tasks. On the whole, the projects accomplished their intended goals and objectives. The supervisors rated most of the Associates' activities as successful.

All parties (sponsors, site supervisors and Summer Associates) were positive about the Summer Associates program and felt it should be continued next year. Ninety-seven percent of the supervisors said they would have a Summer Associates program next year. Sponsors felt that the Summer Associates increased the productivity of their projects and the quality of their

## Executive Summary

services. Sponsors were very pleased as well as impressed by the range of skills and enthusiasm of the Summer Associates.

The Associates benefitted from their service. They enhanced their communication and outreach skills, their ability to interact with people from different backgrounds, and get along with supervisors. Their supervisors observed increased self esteem and maturity in the Associates as a result of their service.

Students used the summer experience to integrate their work with their studies. Others used the experience to test a planned change in career goals, usually toward social service. Associates said they had learned many things about community service and serving other people.

In pre-service and post-service questionnaires, Associates were asked social-psychological scale questions to determine what, if any, impact their service had on them. They showed a slight increase in their feelings of having the power to influence events, no change in their sphere of influence or altruism, and a decrease in the meeting of skill expectations. These results indicate that the program may have had a mild positive effect on their feelings of having more control over events in their lives. The stability of the Sphere of Influence or Altruism scales may mean that the program had no effect on these personality attributes. The decrease in expectations may mean that most felt that their expectations about skill development were not met.

## CONCLUSIONS

- VISTA Summer Associates expanded the capacity of non-profit and public sponsors to provide service to low-income communities.
- VISTA Summer Associates gained considerable personal benefits from their service experience.
- The VISTA program structure of established non-profit and public sponsors was critical to successful implementation of the Summer Associates program.
- The organization of VISTA Summer Associates in small teams contributed to successful service.
- The effectiveness of the recruitment of Summer Associates varied from project to project.
- The VISTA Summer Associates program included individuals from diverse racial, ethnic, educational, cultural and age backgrounds.
- VISTA Summer Associates need more skills training during their period of service.
- More lead time was needed to plan and implement the program.

## **Executive Summary**

- Ten to twelve weeks would be a better length of time for a program of summer service.
- Administrative guidelines for the program are in need of further development.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

- Adopt the VISTA Summer Associates program as a permanent program.
- Initiate future programs in sufficient time to allow sponsors and state program staff to plan, recruit Associates and implement the program.
- Develop an appropriate administrative handbook for the VISTA Summer Associates program.
- Determine guidelines for interaction between VISTA Volunteers and VISTA Summer Associates and include them in the handbook.
- Lengthen the VISTA Summer Associates program from eight - ten weeks to ten - twelve weeks.
- Require the sponsors to provide more skills training.
- Address unrealistically high expectations the Summer Associates might have during recruitment and pre-service orientation.

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## CHAPTER ONE

### THE VISTA SUMMER ASSOCIATES PROGRAM

The Volunteers in Service to America (VISTA) Summer Associates Program was part of the Summer of Service, the initial national service demonstration initiative of the Clinton Administration. This national program enabled participants to work full-time in VISTA projects for eight to ten weeks during the summer of 1993. A total of 708 Summer Associates served in low-income areas in 33 VISTA projects in communities in 22 states throughout the nation. These Associates served in a variety of projects, including helping to build and rehabilitate homes, tutoring in literacy programs, assisting residents of shelters and transitional housing, and tackling environmental and health problems.

#### Program Authority

The VISTA Summer Associates program was managed by ACTION under authority contained in Title I, Part C of the Domestic Volunteer Service Act. The VISTA program was initiated to provide qualified volunteers to community and neighborhood organizations to eliminate and alleviate poverty and poverty-related problems.

The VISTA Summer Associates served alongside VISTA Volunteers at existing VISTA projects, whose purpose was:

*"to strengthen and supplement efforts to eliminate and alleviate poverty and poverty-related problems in the United States by encouraging and enabling persons from all walks of life, all geographical areas, and age groups, including low-income individuals, elderly and retired Americans, to perform meaningful and constructive volunteer service in agencies, institutions, and situations where the application of human talent and dedication may assist in the solution of poverty and poverty-related problems and secure and exploit opportunities for self-advancement by persons afflicted with such problems."*  
(42 U.S.C., 4951)

#### Program Development

VISTA awarded 33 VISTA Summer Associates projects to existing sponsors of VISTA projects in May, 1993. One key factor in the development of the summer program was the speed with which it happened. VISTA announced the availability of the Summer Associates program in February, 1993 and developed the first guidance paper in early March. ACTION's state program offices identified current VISTA sponsors, who could provide service opportunities to a minimum of ten Summer Associates. The state program staff then approached those projects about their interest in participating in the program. Interested sponsors worked with ACTION's state offices to develop program models and project applications.

## Chapter One: The VISTA Summer Associates Program

Funding for the summer initiative was uncertain until early May. The original plan was to fund the program as part of the Administration's economic stimulus package. When Congress did not approve the package, the Administration found alternative funding. Funding for this program was obtained from already approved funds designed to assist areas impacted by Department of Defense base closings. An interagency agreement with the Commission on National and Community Service transferred \$1.2 million to ACTION for the program. ACTION had initially identified fifty-four sponsors for Summer Associates projects. This list was narrowed to 33 projects in 22 states to coincide with those areas affected by base closings.

After final approval of funds in May, the projects began recruitment for the Summer Associates for early June start dates. The Summer Associates were recruited at the local level by the sponsors. In several cases, the ACTION state program office assisted the sponsors with recruitment. The sponsors screened and interviewed the potential candidates. They then selected the best applicants with final approval by the ACTION state office.

Some projects began service the first week in June, and all were underway by the third week of June. ACTION regional and state program staff provided a two day pre-service orientation to the Summer Associates. This orientation covered general information on ACTION, the VISTA program and the expectations and requirements of VISTA Summer Associates. Project supervisors participated in the pre-service orientation and provided specific assignment information. Projects were to provide additional on-the-job information and training after the completion of the pre-service orientation.

The VISTA Summer Associates served an average of 66 days (9.4 weeks). The Associates were primarily between the ages of 18 and 25. They received a subsistence allowance averaging \$620 per month. They worked with 33 organizations that sponsored existing VISTA projects. The VISTA Summer Associates projects began on June 1, 1993 and closed between July 30 and August 21, 1993.

### VISTA Summer Associates Projects

Table 1.1 displays information on the program costs and the numbers of projects, Summer Associates and supervisors. During June, 719 applicants entered pre-service orientation sponsored by ACTION. A small number (1.5 percent) of those who reported to pre-service orientation subsequently decided not to become Summer Associates. Of 708 who became Summer Associates, 702 were supported directly by ACTION and 6 by two sponsoring organizations.

There was a median number of 15 Summer Associates at a project, ranging from ten to 89. There were 152 supervisors with a median of two supervisors per project. There was one supervisor for approximately six to seven Summer Associates. At the end of the program, 688 Summer Associates, or 97 percent, were still in service. Three percent had terminated early, before the end of their service. By comparison, full-year VISTA Volunteers entering service during fiscal year 1990 had a three-month completion rate of 99 percent and a twelve-month completion rate of 81 percent.

## Chapter One: The VISTA Summer Associates Program

The total direct cost of the program was \$1.2 million. The cost per Summer Associate, based on the 702 Summer Associates fully supported by ACTION, was \$1,709. The cost of ACTION staff to develop and manage the program was in existing budgets.

**TABLE 1.1  
PROGRAM STATISTICS**

	Total	Project Median	Project Range
Number of Summer Associates entering service	708	15	10 - 107
Number of Summer Associates completing service	688	13	7 - 89
Summer Associates Completion Rate	97%		
Number of Supervisors, including the overall project supervisor	152	2	1 - 24
Number of Summer Associates projects	33		
Total direct program costs *	\$1.2 mil		
Direct cost per Summer Associate (based on 702 Associates fully supported by ACTION)	\$1,709		

\* Direct costs are those which support training, transportation, supervision and living allowances for the Summer Associates. Administrative costs were absorbed by ACTION headquarters, regional and state staff.

Example 1.1 on the next two pages provides a context for the program. The example provides short vignettes on seven Summer Associates projects, focusing on Associate activities. Chapter Two describes activities in greater detail and Chapter Four outlines project accomplishments.

Table 1.2 provides basic information on each VISTA Summer Associate project. The table is organized alphabetically by state and shows the project sponsor, project location, focus area, the number of Summer Associates and the number of supervisors.

**EXAMPLE 1.1**  
**EXAMPLES OF VISTA SUMMER ASSOCIATE PROJECTS**

**VISTA Summer Associates worked in Health and Nutrition programs throughout the State of Texas under the sponsorship of the Texas State Department of Health.** In Dallas and Houston, Summer Associates conducted door-to-door interviews to increase the awareness of the Women, Infants and Children (WIC) program. One Associate remarked, "I didn't realize poor people also lived on the north side." This was a typical comment of many VISTA Associates who worked outside of their local neighborhoods for the first time. Many Associates learned that poverty knows no ethnic boundaries nor is it restricted to a particular neighborhood.

**In other Texas communities, Associates promoted and coordinated the local efforts to immunize children from preventable diseases.** One of the VISTA Associates at a health fair hosted by the Summer Volunteers stated, "We are actually lower in our immunization rate than many Third World countries; we need to reach parents about immunizing their kids." Another Associate said, "If we reach only one child this summer, we will be successful in our efforts."

**Habitat for Humanity used 35 Summer Associates in Denver and in six nearby communities to improve housing.** The Summer Associates have greatly increased awareness of Habitat in the communities they serve. They worked in the construction of homes, volunteer recruitment, and public relations. Several of the Associates stated they could have taken jobs that would have paid them more but they wanted to give something to their community and get "real life" experiences at the same time. Many Associates noted that it had been their first opportunity to become part of a group effort. "Working in a group is a neat experience; when a group works well together, we all learn from each other and take pride in starting something and finishing it."

**In another Habitat site in Chicago, Summer Associates worked to provide affordable housing for low-income families by rehabilitating existing buildings.** One Asian family is particularly grateful because of the efforts of the Summer Associates since their efforts enabled the family to move into their first house three and a half months earlier than expected. As the mother prepared the family's first meal in her new home, an Associate was overheard to say, "this makes the summer worthwhile."

**EXAMPLE 1.1 (CONTINUED)**  
**EXAMPLES OF VISTA SUMMER ASSOCIATE PROJECTS**

**Sponsored by the Massachusetts Department of Education, 30 VISTA Summer Associates conducted family literacy services in the Boston area.** The Associates provided direct literacy services to parents and children by developing a program that will assist family participants in the use of their local library. Specific project activities included tutoring adults and children, teaching English as a Second Language (ESL), teaching computer literacy, providing graduate equivalency degree (GED) preparation and providing day-care services. As one of the Associates stated, "everything we did was important."

**In another Literacy project in Baltimore, VISTA Associates spent their summer assisting some 125 kids (aged 8-12) every day to catch up on things they may have missed during the school year.** The purpose of this project, named The Door, was to implement an inter-generational literacy summer program in the neighborhood. One of the contributors for this project has been quoted as follows, "This is not just a do-gooder, touchy-feely thing . . . The Door is evaluated by the University of Maryland so we know where we're hitting the mark and where we're not."

**In Detroit, Summer Associates developed a recruiting plan for volunteers to train as tutors and learners by working with churches, community organizations and others.** This project focused on recruiting members of the local community to serve as tutors. One Associate, a third-year, dental hygiene student, remarked, "I enjoyed working on this project. It showed me I can work with a group of people. I like volunteering, and would like to come back as a volunteer tutor." Another Associate remarked that his experiences during the summer helped him to "have more patience" and learn more about Detroit.

Chapter One: The VISTA Summer Associates Program

TABLE 1.2  
1993 VISTA SUMMER ASSOCIATES PROJECTS

Name of Organization	Primary Focus	# Associates	# Supervisors
Literacy Volunteers of Maricopa County, Inc. Phoenix, Arizona	Literacy	11	1
Good Neighbor Love Center West Memphis, Arkansas	Housing	55	8
NE Arkansas Council on Family Violence Jonesboro, Arkansas	Family Violence	15	3
Child Abuse Prevention Council, Inc. Sacramento, California	Family Violence	12	6
Los Angeles County 4-H Development Fund Los Angeles, California	Summer Youth	12	8
California Literacy, Inc. San Gabriel, California	Literacy	30	1
Habitat for Humanity Denver, Colorado	Housing	35	7
Literacy Volunteers of America - CT Hartford, Connecticut	Literacy	30	5
United Way of Dade County Miami, Florida	Housing	11	1
Habitat for Humanity of Greater Miami Miami, Florida	Housing	15	1
Concerted Services, Inc. Waycross, Georgia	Education	12	3
YMCA of Metropolitan Atlanta, Inc. Atlanta, Georgia	Literacy	12	3
Uptown Habitat for Humanity, Inc. Chicago, Illinois	Housing	30	2
Baltimore Reads, Inc. Baltimore, Maryland	Literacy	15	1
Massachusetts Dept. of Ed./Bureau of Adult Ed. Malden, Massachusetts	Literacy	31	6
Warren/Conner Development Coalition Detroit, Michigan	Summer Youth	40	7
Meridian Housing Authority Meridian, Mississippi	Substance Abuse	10	1

Chapter One: The VISTA Summer Associates Program

TABLE 1.2 (CONTINUED)  
1993 VISTA SUMMER ASSOCIATES PROJECTS

Name of Organization	Primary Focus	# Associates	# Supervisors
Essex County Division of Community Action East Orange, New Jersey	Homeless	10	8
Project Read, Inc. Newark, New Jersey	Literacy	10	1
Archway Programs, Inc. Atco, New Jersey	Summer Youth	15	1
Highbridge Community Life Center Bronx, New York	Summer Youth	11	1
Bedford Stuyvesant Restoration Corporation Brooklyn, New York	Mentoring	10	1
Black Veterans for Social Justice, Inc. Brooklyn, New York	Homeless	11	1
NC Low Income Housing Coalition Raleigh, North Carolina	Housing	11	8
Ohio Literacy Network Columbus, Ohio	Literacy	20	3
Energy Coordinating Agency of Philadelphia Philadelphia, Pennsylvania	Environment	20	5
Greater Philadelphia Federation of Settlements Philadelphia, Pennsylvania	Immunization	10	6
Scranton Housing Authority Scranton, Pennsylvania	Immunization	10	2
Habitat for Humanity of Rhode Island, Inc. Providence, Rhode Island	Housing	8	2
Housing Authority of the City of Greenville Greenville, South Carolina	Literacy	19	1
United Way of Greater Memphis Memphis, Tennessee	Housing	18	11
Texas Department of Health Austin, Texas	Nutrition	89	13
Fremont Public Association Seattle, Washington	Summer Youth	60	24

## Chapter One: The VISTA Summer Associates Program

The VISTA Summer Associate projects provided a variety of services. Figure 1.1 displays the distribution of projects among four program priority areas specified in the national service legislation: health and human needs, education, public safety and environment. Most of the projects addressed two of the program priority areas: health and human needs (18 projects) and education (11 projects). Three projects addressed public safety issues and one environmental issues.

Figure 1.2 shows the focus areas of the 33 projects. Two-thirds of the projects concentrated on three focus areas: literacy (9 projects), housing (8 projects), and summer youth (5 projects). The remaining eleven projects addressed eight focus areas.

**FIGURE 1.1**  
**PROGRAM PRIORITY AREAS**  
**33 Projects**

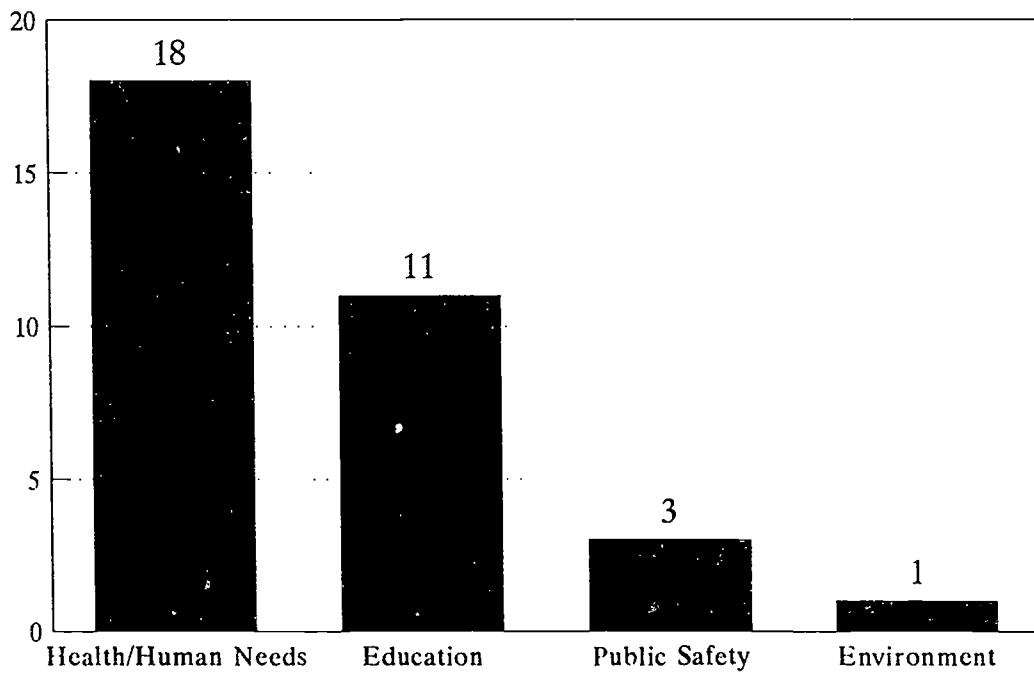
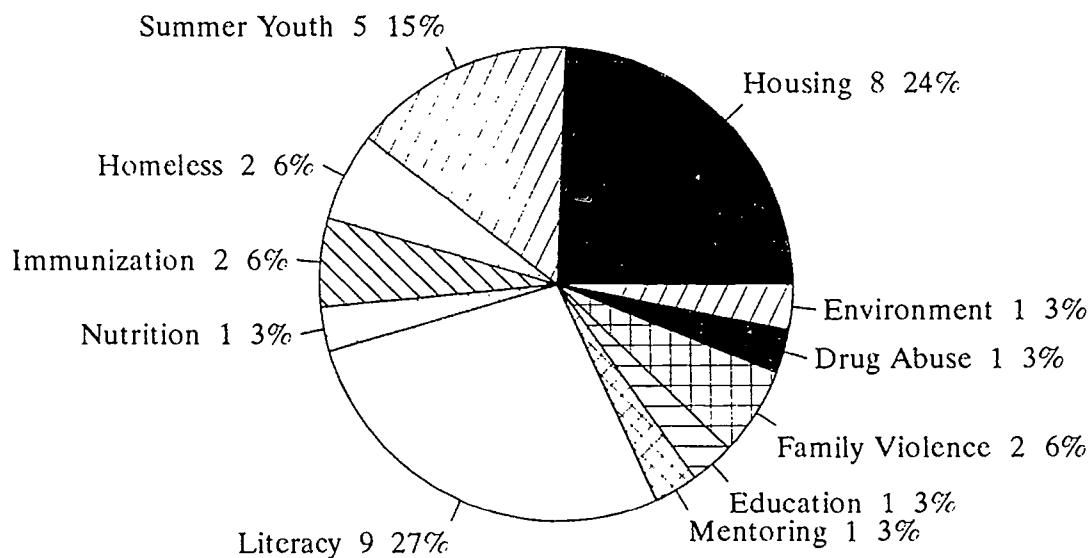
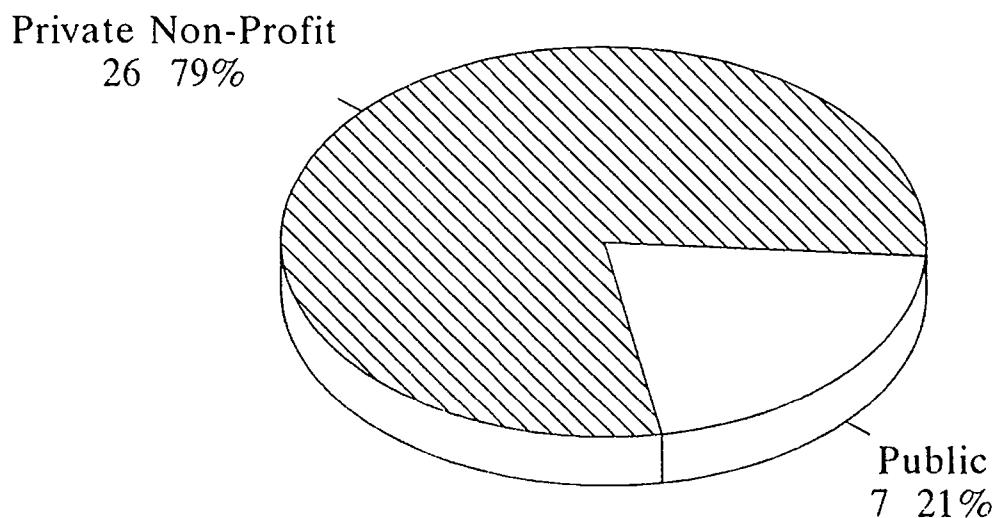


Figure 1.3 shows the types of sponsors hosting VISTA Summer Associates projects. Twenty-six or 79 percent were private non-profit organizations, and seven or 21 percent were public agencies.

**FIGURE 1.2**  
**FOCUS AREAS**  
**33 Projects**



**FIGURE 1.3**  
**SPONSOR TYPES**  
**33 Projects**



## **Chapter One: The VISTA Summer Associates Program**

### **Evaluation Methodology**

ACTION's Program Analysis and Evaluation Division conducted the evaluation. We collected pre-service questionnaires from 719 Summer Associates when they reported to training and 513 Summer Associates (75 percent return rate) at the completion of their service. We administered questionnaires to all project and site supervisors and received 120, a 78 percent return rate. We sent questionnaires to all VISTA Volunteers working with the Summer Associates and received 94, a 47% return rate. The questionnaires collected information on Associates' backgrounds, their activities and their views about their service experiences. From the project supervisors we collected information on Associates' activities, the accomplishments of the Summer Associate program and their views about the program. From the VISTA Volunteers we gathered information about their activities with the Associates. Information from the questionnaires appears in Chapters One, Two and Three.

Additionally, we conducted one-to-three day site visits at a cross-section of fourteen projects. We selected nine projects that reflected the geographic distribution, program focus and project size of the entire program. To obtain corroborative observations, we supplemented these nine site visits with five other projects located near the nine selected projects. During the site visits, we used a mix of qualitative and quantitative data gathering techniques. Information from the site visits appears in Chapter Three.

## CHAPTER TWO

### THE SUMMER ASSOCIATES AND THEIR ACTIVITIES

VISTA Summer Associates with a wide range of backgrounds and experiences performed diverse activities in different kinds of projects. In this chapter we examine the Summer Associates, their activities and the beneficiaries of their efforts.

#### THE VISTA SUMMER ASSOCIATES

##### Demographic Characteristics

The demographic characteristics of the VISTA Summer Associates are in Table 2.1. Comparison with the data from a recently completed evaluation of VISTA revealed that:

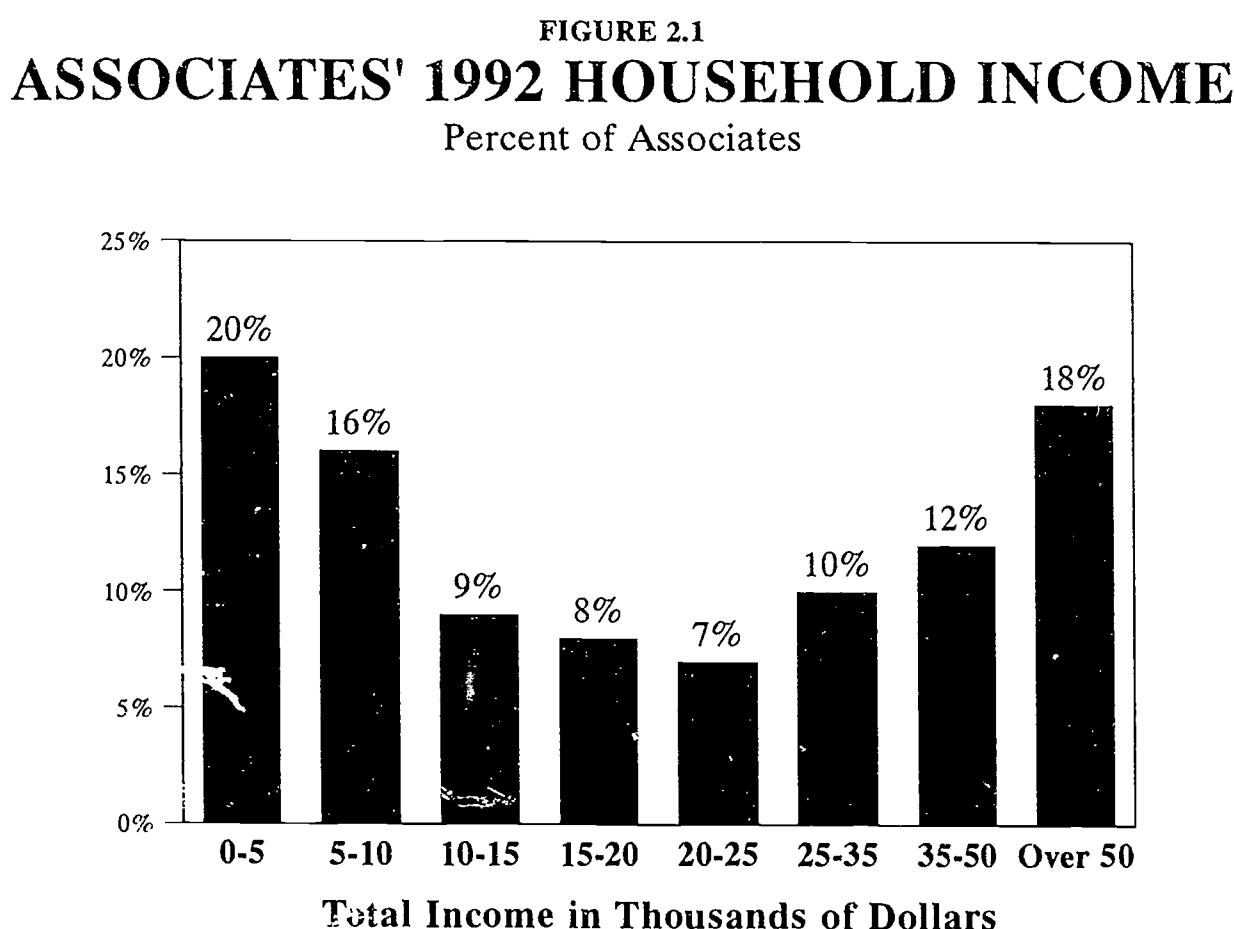
- Thirty-four percent of the Summer Associates were male. This was eleven percent higher than the number of males serving as VISTA Volunteers.
- Sixty-three percent of the Summer Associates were minority compared to 42 percent in VISTA. Most of this difference resulted from an increased number of African Americans, from 23 percent in VISTA to 44 percent in the Summer Associates program.
- While the percentages of persons with a high school education were similar in both programs, Summer Associates were more likely to have some college education (55%) and VISTA Volunteers were more likely to be college graduates (43%). This was related to more Summer Associates being in college prior to joining the program than VISTA Volunteers.
- Fewer Summer Associates (58%) than VISTA Volunteers (81%) lived in the communities served by the VISTA projects. The median one-way commuting distance for those Summer Associates living outside the community was 7.5 miles. The limited commuting range suggests that those who did not identify themselves as living in the community being served were living close by in the larger metropolitan or geographic area. The median length of time living in the community for those Summer Associates who lived in the community was 16 years.
- The median age of the Summer Associates (22 years) was much younger than that of the VISTA Volunteers (36 years). While the VISTA Summer Associates Program targeted persons aged 18 to 25, the program was not limited to those ages. Ages ranged from 18 to 69. Twenty-five percent of the Summer Associates were 26 years of age and older, 15 percent were 30 and older, and 5 percent were 40 and older.

TABLE 2.1  
CHARACTERISTICS OF  
VISTA SUMMER ASSOCIATES

	VISTA Summer Associates (N=719)	1993 VISTA Evaluation (N=803)
	<u>Percent</u>	<u>Percent</u>
<b>Gender</b>		
Female	66%	77%
Male	34%	23%
<b>Ethnicity</b>		
American Indian or Alaskan Native	1%	1%
Asian or Pacific Islander	3%	3%
African American, not of Hispanic origin	44%	23%
Hispanic and Puerto Rican	13%	12%
White, but not of Hispanic origin	37%	58%
Multiracial	2%	2%
<b>Education</b>		
Less than high school	5%	6%
High school	17%	17%
Some college	55%	34%
College graduate	15%	29%
Graduate school	7%	14%
<b>Living in the community served by the VISTA project</b>	58%	81%
<b>Median Age</b>	22 Years	36 Years

## Chapter Two: The Summer Associates and their Activities

The Summer Associates projects recruited participants with a wide range of household incomes. The two largest groups of Associates were from households with the lowest (twenty percent under \$5,000) and highest (eighteen percent greater than \$50,000) incomes. About a third (36%) of the Associates were from households with incomes less than \$10,000, a third (34%) from households between \$10,000 and \$35,000, and a third (30%) from households with incomes greater than \$35,000. Associates who were students prior to the summer were more likely to have higher incomes. Older Associates and those who had been raising families were more likely to have lower incomes. Figure 2.1 displays the 1992 household incomes for the Summer Associates.



During the site visits to projects, we encountered the same wide range of Summer Associates pictured in these statistics. We interviewed Associates who had all types of income and education levels, who had varied motivations for serving, and were performing different types of service. We illustrate this diversity in Example 2.1 on the next two pages with descriptions of eleven of the Summer Associates we met.

**EXAMPLE 2.1**  
**EXAMPLES OF SUMMER ASSOCIATES**

Lois is a recent high school graduate who wanted to experience the "real" Boston before starting college in the fall at Harvard. **She served in Boston as a mentor and helped build academic knowledge in math, reading and writing.** According to Lois, "A mentor is more than just a teacher, they're someone who is really there for their students and supports them in whatever problems they may have".

Asim is from Roxbury, Massachusetts and **worked in Dorchester teaching literacy with a group of ten youths aged six through eleven.** As the eldest of nine children and his family's primary male provider, Asim also served as an adult male role model for the youths, many of whom came from single parent homes. Asim's reading interests range from John Steinbeck to Alfred Hitchcock and talked of starting the youngsters he works with in a creative writing workshop. "Not bad", he says, "for someone who just six years ago could neither read nor write".

Joe served in a 4-H club in Los Angeles County, California, working with low-income Hispanic and African American youth. He was a horticulture student at a nearby community college and a former gang member who grew up in housing projects. He had been a volunteer with the 4-H for more than one year prior to the summer and was about to leave to take a summer job. **He turned down the full-time job to work as a Summer Associate, since otherwise he would not be able to work with the children.** He said, "It is important for the kids to have a male role model they can relate to. I show them you don't have to follow wrong footsteps." At the end of the summer he planned to work part-time, go to school full time, and continue his volunteer work with the youth at the 4-H.

Lisa worked in a Habitat for Humanity project in Colorado. She grew up in Virginia and received her B.A. degree from a college in Virginia one year ago. She was unemployed prior to joining the program. **She joined the Summer Associate program to test her interest in joining Peace Corps and VISTA.** She is now applying to go to graduate school and wants to do more work with non-profit organizations in the future.

Kurt also worked in a Habitat for Humanity project in Colorado. He was from the town in which the project is located and a third-year student at a nearby university. **He had always wanted to perform volunteer work and needed summer money to go to school.** He heard about the program through a teacher. He recently switched majors, from engineering to the humanities, and being a Summer Associate reinforced his decision to work with people.

**EXAMPLE 2.1 (CONTINUED)**  
**EXAMPLES OF SUMMER ASSOCIATES**

Arday served as a Management Information Specialist in a neighborhood social service center in the South Bronx, New York. **He was a college senior in school on a basketball scholarship. He worked with the project's client youth in a basketball camp.** He was responsible for developing and generating a report to the city on the center's adult educational activities and accomplishments. Arday said he would like to come back after college.

Teresa was a young woman who grew up in the neighborhood of a social service center in South Bronx, New York, as one its clients. **As a way of giving back to the community, this former client enrolled as a Summer Associate to help other clients at the center's storefront with problems related to housing and homelessness, food, education and day care.** During the summer, she learned to operate a computer, designed an evaluation for the Summer program and developed her own career goals in the criminal justice field.

Jenny had just completed her pre-med program at Montana State University. While visiting Seattle, she saw an announcement for the Summer Associates program and decided to acquire some experience in community service. **She worked with children in a Seattle emergency housing project.** In the fall, she planned to start medical school at Harvard University.

Laura represented a third generation of active community service. The Summer Associates program afforded her **the opportunity to work in a Memphis community development project conducting a needs assessment of local residents.** She planned to complete her degree in nursing next year.

Kristy recently graduated from college with a B.A. **She worked in Baltimore teaching literacy to African-American youth.** "Being a product of white suburbia America," she said, "I was interested in expanding my cultural horizons. Not only have I provided the children with a role model, but they too have given me something. What this program has done for me is turn an issue into individuals." She believed the experience the program provided will last a lifetime.

### Prior Experience

In the pre-service questionnaire, we asked the Summer Associates several questions about their affiliation with their project's sponsoring organization and their knowledge about their work as a Summer Associate. Almost one-quarter of the Associates (23%) had a prior association with the project's sponsoring organization. Of those with a prior association, most (61%) had been volunteers and almost one-fifth (17%) had been part-time employees with the sponsor. Almost three-quarters (72%) knew what they would do as a Summer Associate prior to attending the pre-service orientation. Two-thirds (66%) knew the type of project (for example, housing, literacy, etc.) where they would be working.

Also, we asked Summer Associates who knew the type of project in which they would be working about prior experience in that type of work. Of the 473 (or 66%) Associates who knew at enrollment the type of project in which they would be working, only 20% said they had no prior work or educational experience in that type of work (see Table 2.2). Almost two thirds of the associates (65%) said they had specific skills with education, youth or the elderly, had done prior volunteer or social service work, or had specific occupational skills. Another 15% had either interpersonal skills or an educational background in the type of work in which they would be performing.

**TABLE 2.2**  
**PRIOR EXPERIENCE**  
**(FOR THE 473 SUMMER ASSOCIATES WHO KNEW**  
**THE TYPE OF WORK THEY WOULD BE PERFORMING)**

Experience	Percent of Associates
No experience	20%
Skills working with education	15%
Prior volunteer work	15%
Skills working with youth or elderly	13%
Social service work	12%
Occupational skills	10%
Interpersonal skills	8%
Educational background	7%

### Reasons for Becoming a Summer Associate

In an open-ended question on the pre-service questionnaire, we asked the Summer Associates' about their reasons for becoming a Summer Associate (see Table 2.3). Most (53%) of the Associates said they joined to help others, the community or society. Another 20% said that they wanted to work in a specific program area, such as youth, the homeless, or literacy. This pattern is similar to that shown by VISTA Volunteers in a recent VISTA evaluation.

TABLE 2.3  
REASONS FOR BECOMING A SUMMER ASSOCIATE

Reason	Percent of Associates
To help others/the community/society	53%
To work a specific area (youth, homeless, literacy, etc.)	20%
Personal improvement or interest	11%
Interest in volunteer/charitable work	11%
Job or job benefits	5%

### PROJECT AND ASSOCIATE ACTIVITIES

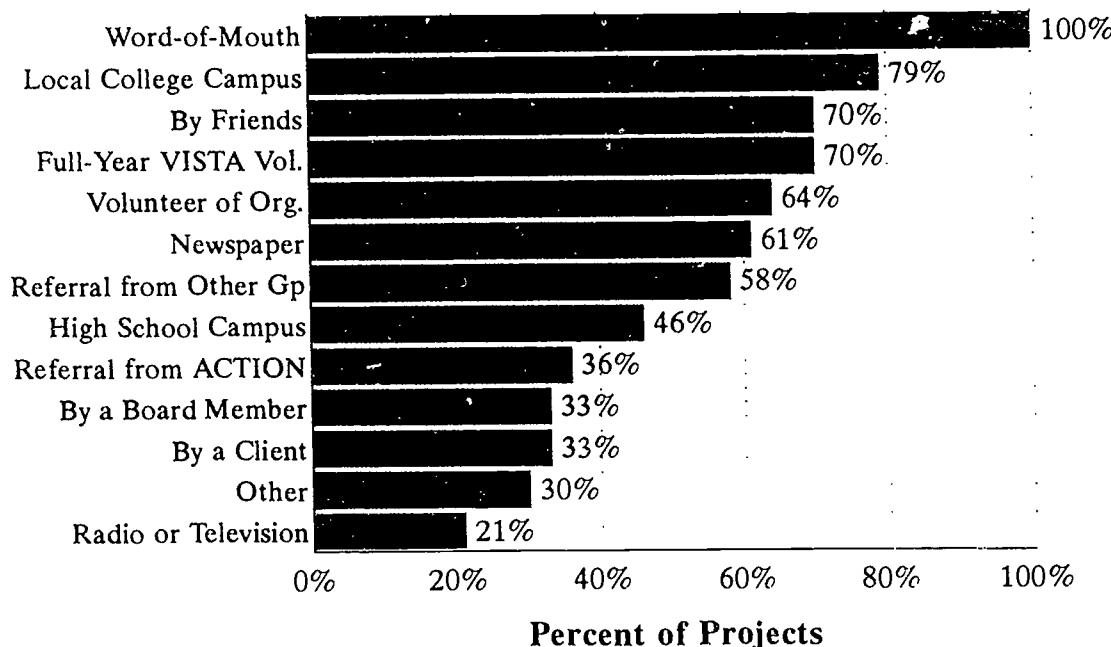
#### Recruitment, Training and Supervision

The VISTA Summer Associates Project supervisors were responsible for recruitment of the Summer Associates at their projects. In most cases, they had four weeks or less to recruit their Summer Associates. Figure 2.2 shows that most of the 33 projects used multiple methods to recruit Associates. The one method found at all projects was word-of-mouth. The next most common methods, found at least seventy percent of the projects, were local college campus recruitment (79%), through friends (70%), and by a VISTA Volunteer (70%).

We asked the Summer Associates supervisors to identify which recruiting method yielded the most Summer Associates. Three methods were identified as the most successful by at least ten percent of the supervisors: word-of-mouth (28%), newspaper advertisements (17%), and local college campus recruitment (13%).

**FIGURE 2.2**  
**HOW PROJECTS RECRUITED ASSOCIATES**  
Supervisor Responses by Project

**Recruitment Method**



After the projects recruited, screened and selected their Summer Associates, they submitted their choices to the ACTION state program offices for final approval. Those invited to become VISTA Summer Associates reported to a one-and-a-half day pre-service orientation conducted by the ACTION state program offices. Pre-service orientation varied from project to project but generally included the following topics: discussion about volunteerism, VISTA and the Summer Associates program, working in the community as a Summer Associate, benefits and terms of service, being an effective Associate, and reviewing the expectations and policies of the local project supervisors.

Most supervisors said the Summer Associates needed additional training when they reported for service at their projects. Ten percent of the supervisors said that the Associates required a great deal of additional training, 76% said some additional training, and 14% said they required no additional training.

In all 33 projects, the supervisors did provide additional training. The projects provided an average of 20 hours on-the-job orientation (ranging from 3 to 80 hours) and an average of 13 hours in-service training (ranging from 2 to 40 hours) to the Summer Associates. At the end of the summer, most of the Summer Associates (72%) felt that they did not need more training than that they had already received. Conversely, 28 percent felt they needed additional training.

The five most common training topics covered by the projects were: the goals and objectives of the sponsoring organization (91% of projects), specific skills needed for the assignment (82%), program administration/management (67%), communications/public relations (67%), and assessment of client need (64%). The Summer Associates generally rated the training in these six topics positively.

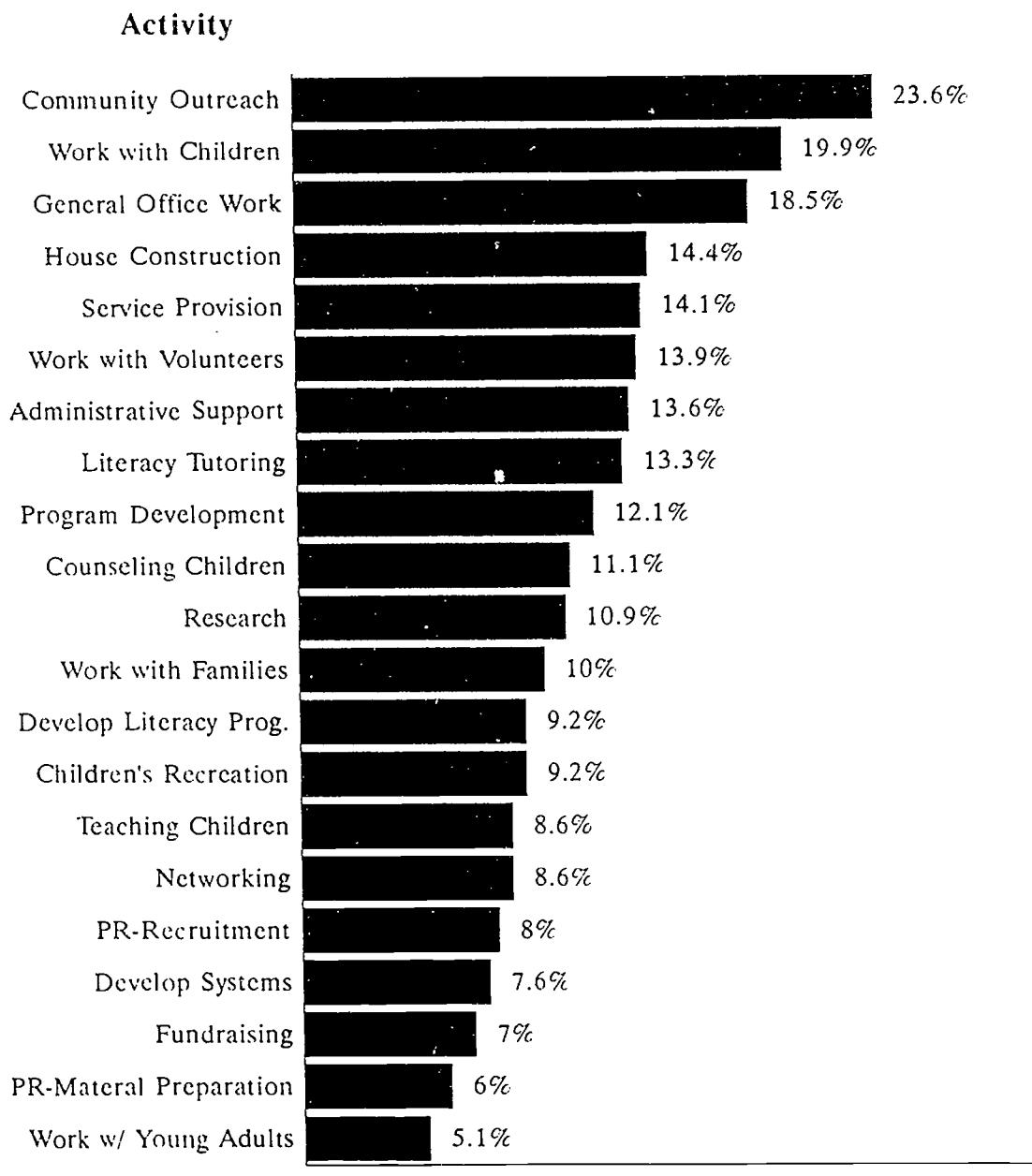
### Summer Associates Activities

The Summer Associates said they worked an average of 40 hours each week. Their supervisors stated that the Associates spend an average of 35 hours each week on their assigned tasks. According to the supervisors, the Associates worked, on average, two evenings per week and two weekends per month. The supervisors also said they spent an average of 17 hours supervising the associates. The typical Associate had one supervisor and worked with three VISTA Volunteers, four other Associates, four community volunteers, three paid project employees and 21 service recipients.

Most of the VISTA Volunteers who worked with the Summer Associates indicated they had multiple roles. The most common role for the VISTA Volunteers was co-worker (61%) followed by group supervisor (38%), mentor (37%), coordinator (36%) and technical advisor (31%).

After they began their service, the Summer Associates performed in a variety of activities (Figure 2.3). More than three-fourths of the Summer Associates served in one of four activities: community outreach (public education/canvassing neighborhoods/flyer distribution) (23.6%), working with children (19.9%), general office work (18.5%) and house construction (14.4%). Most Associates performed two or more activities.

**FIGURE 2.3**  
**SUMMER ASSOCIATE ACTIVITIES**  
Summer Associates' Responses

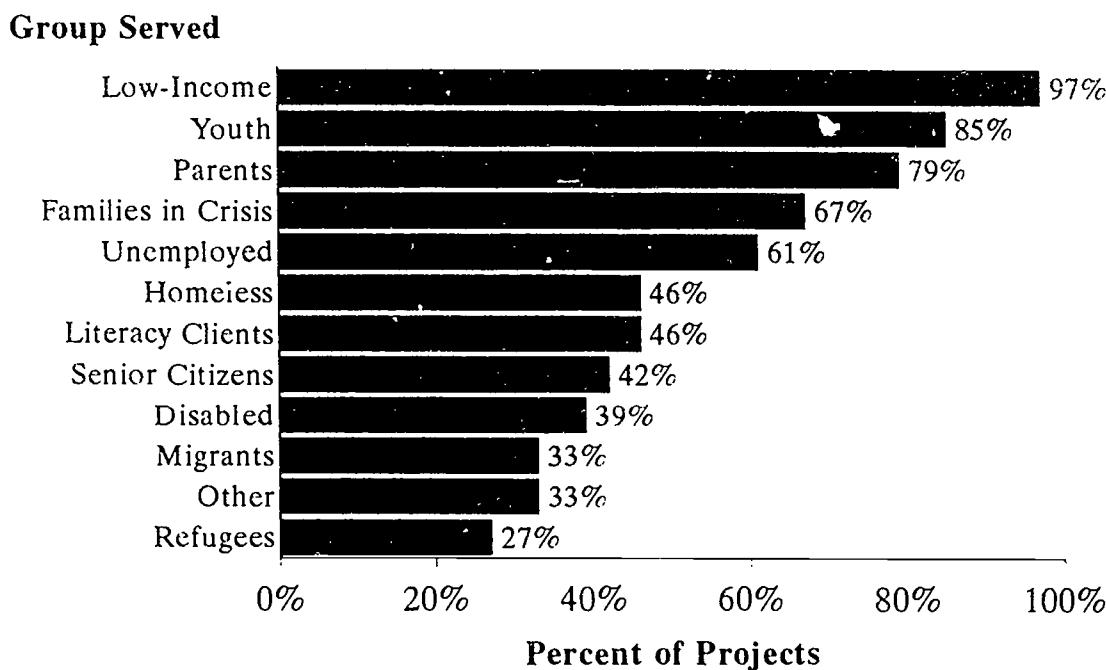


Percentages total more than 100% since many Associates had multiple activities.

### Program Beneficiaries

Program beneficiaries were as diverse as the Summer Associates and their activities. Figure 2.4 shows the types of beneficiaries of the VISTA Summer Associates Program according to the supervisors. Almost all the projects (97%) served low-income persons. Eighty-five percent of the projects served youth and 79% served parents. Sixty-seven percent served families in crisis and 61% served the unemployed. More than half of the projects served these five beneficiary groups. At least twenty-seven percent of the projects also served seven other groups, including the homeless (46%), literacy clients (46%), senior citizens (42%), and the disabled (39%).

**FIGURE 2.4**  
**PROGRAM BENEFICIARIES**  
 Supervisor Responses by Project

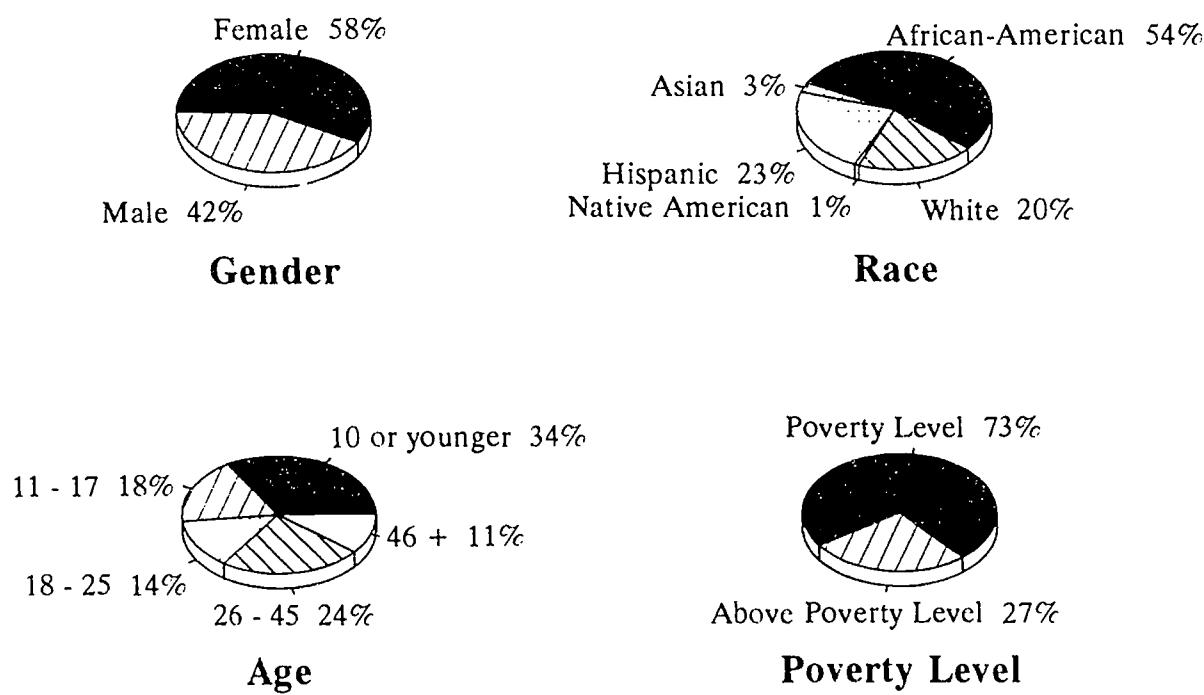


## Chapter Two: The Summer Associates and their Activities

Figure 2.5 displays the following profile of project beneficiaries:

- More than half (58%) of the beneficiaries were female.
- More than half (54 %) were African-American. About a quarter (23%) were Hispanic and one-fifth were White.
- About half (52%) were younger than 18 years. About a third (34%) were age 10 or younger.
- Almost three-quarters (73%) were at or below the poverty level.

**FIGURE 2.5**  
**CHARACTERISTICS OF PROGRAM BENEFICIARIES**  
Supervisor Responses by Project



## CHAPTER THREE

### SITE VISIT FINDINGS

To obtain an in-depth view of the program at the project level, we made one to three day site visits to fourteen of the 33 VISTA Summer Associate projects in July and August, 1993. We selected nine projects that reflected the geographic dispersion, program focuses and size found in the entire program. We used a mixture of qualitative and quantitative data gathering techniques for collecting the on-site information.

At each project, the persons conducting the site visit interviewed the overall project supervisor, site supervisors, Summer Associates, project beneficiaries and VISTA Volunteers where applicable. We discussed the project with other sponsor staff and made direct observations about the projects. We made additional site visits to five other projects located near the nine selected projects for confirmatory observations and discussions with sponsor staff and Associates.

#### PROGRAM EFFECTS

##### Attitudes of Participants

All parties (sponsors, site supervisors, and Summer Associates) were positive about the Summer Associates program and felt it should be continued next year. In every site visited, the sponsor and Summer Associates supervisors were laudatory in their support for the program. Generally, they were pleased with the Associates and the work they had accomplished.

All the ACTION state directors were enthusiastic about the program. One stated that the program was one of the more innovative efforts on the part of VISTA in recent years. Another felt the program established an extremely good rapport with a large state agency that will continue. Another was quite impressed with the use of the Summer Associates in local housing efforts and acknowledged their substantial productivity. A fourth remarked that the program resulted in a flurry of productive activity unprecedented in his experience with ACTION.

Summer Associates were equally positive about their experiences and the program. In general, they were pleased to be performing community service for the sponsors. In the South Bronx, Associates said that they had received assistance from the sponsor and had been given the opportunity to "give back" to the community. A young Associate in Waycross, Georgia stated that she thought the project staff could not have done a better job, that they were great.

##### Effects on the Sponsoring Organizations

Sponsors repeatedly stated that the VISTA Summer Associates increased the productivity of their projects and the quality of their services. For example, in Texas, staff from the State Department of Health told us how the program allowed them to expand outreach efforts to

### Chapter Three: Site Visit Findings

inform low-income residents of the availability of free immunization clinics and the services within their community for the WIC program. At a Chicago Habitat site, the project director said that the Summer Associates enabled him to complete a building which housed sixteen families three months ahead of schedule.

Similarly, the Habitat supervisors in Colorado said the Associates allowed each affiliate to dramatically increase and accelerate their building schedule. In Los Angeles, the presence of Associates meant more personal attention and tutoring at 4-H clubs that served at-risk children living in public housing. The sponsors of most projects said that the presence of the Summer Associates provided a catalytic effect to their projects and they hoped that the momentum of the Associates' efforts would continue.

Sponsors indicated they were very pleased as well as impressed by the range of skills and enthusiasm of the Summer Associates. In Memphis, the project supervisor related how the Associates provided a full range of skills to neighborhood development projects working in a local food bank. At a site in Jonesboro, Arkansas, Summer Associates were recruited from the local college to support a new Family Violence Center. Sixty Summer Associates worked at 31 different sites for 22 different organizations throughout greater Seattle in projects addressing hunger, homelessness, drugs, day care for immigrant children, and youth at risk.

Every sponsor at the diverse projects we visited said their Summer Associates came with the kinds of skills necessary to carry out their expected duties during their summer of service. In virtually every setting, supervisors felt the Summer Associates were extremely valuable resources.

### Effects on the Summer Associates

Most of the Associates liked what they had learned and accomplished during the summer. Associates who planned on returning to college after the summer said their experience integrated their work with their studies. Other Associates said they used their service to test a planned change in career goals, usually toward social service. The Summer Associates who were in school clearly intended to build upon their service as part of their ongoing academic training.

Associates said they had learned many things about community service and serving other people. Lower income Associates viewed the program as a way to gain work experience and as a bridge to gaining full-time employment. Several wanted to use their experience to become VISTA Volunteers with the sponsor. This was especially true in Los Angeles and the South Bronx. One supervisor in the South Bronx said, "These are single moms getting their skills developed for a future as group facilitators and community organizers."

We heard many statements from Associates about how the program had helped them. Some comments included the following:

*"It's nice to put in an effort and see your results." (Colorado)*

*"I got to do things you couldn't ordinarily do at the entry level in a corporation. I got to learn where I shine and where I don't." (Colorado)*

*"I enjoyed working on this project. It showed me I can work with a group of people as a part of a team." (Detroit)*

*"VISTA gave me the opportunity to interact, observe, and study life in the urban environment, a position that has played an essential part in my education as an urban anthropologist." (Memphis)*

*"It was beautiful for me to see all of my people working together for something positive." (Bronx)*

*"The client thanked me for helping him and I thanked him for giving me the opportunity to help him. I know it was hard for the brother to turn to someone younger for help. I am glad he put his pride aside and let me lend a hand. In the shelter system a lot of men lose their pride and self worth, all they want is someone to listen." (Brooklyn)*

*"The contact with these students has given me a lot of insight on some of the problems they are encountering." (Memphis)*

*". . . being a (Summer Associate) gave me the opportunity to help a parent get involved in their child's life, to bring them closer as a family, and to give a child a happy and memorable childhood." (Georgia)*

*"I learned in a practical way things about teaching young people that I wouldn't get in a college classroom." (Bedford-Stuyvesant)*

*"It is a non-threatening way to get jobs and know the workplace. I would like to come back again (as an Associate)." (South Bronx)*

#### **Visibility and Public Relations**

The Summer Associates program was a public relations boost for VISTA. The Washington state office in Seattle received applications from 52 different organizations requesting a total of 216 Summer Associates. The local sponsor subsequently placed 60 Volunteers with 22 organizations at 31 different sites. The project received good publicity on their activities.

Most project locations received positive articles in the local newspapers. In Austin, a newspaper headline in the Austin American-Statesman about Summer Associates efforts with immunization and health read, *"Students enlist for front-line service to help solve social problems"*. In Memphis, Summer Associates were assisting several neighborhood associations to revitalize several low-income areas of the inner city. The local paper heralded these efforts under the banner of *"Good neighbors' fight to reclaim declining areas"*. A Los Angeles Times article on Summer Associates working in 4-H clubs and teaching literacy was entitled, *"Small*

### Chapter Three: Site Visit Findings

*project yields big rewards.*" The Boston Globe headlined an article as "*VISTA makes a comeback.*"

## PROGRAMMING

### Length and Timing of the Program

All sponsors, supervisors and state program staff said that more lead time is needed to properly plan and implement a summer program. In their opinion, this year's program barely allowed the minimum amount of time to design a project, write a proposal and recruit the Associates. This put a tremendous burden on all involved.

Associates and supervisors indicated that eight weeks was too short a period given the recruiting effort and the need for one to two weeks of on-the-job training. Some Associates and supervisors said that the Associates were just becoming effective in their service and work groups as the program neared the end. For those Associates returning to school, twelve weeks gave them no break between finishing and starting the next semester. A ten week summer of service appealed to most of the Associates interviewed. The supervisors generally recommended a ten to twelve week program.

Most of the Summer Associates stated that serving for one year would be difficult and preferred serving for two to three months. Many said they could only serve for a summer and that they would not consider doing a full year of service due to their continuing their education.

Supervisors suggested the Associates program be operated throughout the year, not just during the summer. This would enable additional flexibility in their program planning as well as provide them with short-term resources. Many Summer Associates suggested that having the program available throughout the year would provide a greater opportunity for others to participate in community service.

### Organizational Approach

We observed that the Summer Associates program used a variety of organizational approaches. Sponsors included single sites, single sponsors with multiple sites, umbrella organizations with multiple sites and statewide programs. Each approach had its advantages, but no one approach appeared more or less successful than another. Each was unique to the sponsoring organization and local conditions. Success and problems seemed more related to individual sponsors, sites and project objectives than the organizational approach.

The Texas and Massachusetts projects were managed by a state agency, relying upon established agencies to coordinate the work of the Summer Associates. Both programs were tightly focused, with the Summer Associates achieving considerable productivity.

The majority of projects were single sites with single sponsors. In Georgia, the Headstart program was operated through a local social service agency which exercised direct administrative

control over the activities of the Summer Associates. In Baltimore, ten Associates served in a literacy project housed in one building.

The Denver, Detroit, Los Angeles, Memphis, and Seattle projects had single sponsors with multiple sites. In Los Angeles, Summer Associates worked in seven 4-H clubs located in or near public housing units throughout the city. The Denver project was a regional project under a single sponsor, Habitat for Humanity, with six separate projects operating in six different cities.

In Seattle and Memphis, Summer Associates were assigned to umbrella organizations which then assigned the Associates to different organizations. Usually, each organization had the responsibility of recruiting their own volunteers and exercised administrative authority over their Associates in conjunction with the umbrella organization. In the latter two instances, supervisory grants were made to the umbrella organization to cover administrative expenses.

### **Recruiting**

Recruiting methods varied considerably from site to site with varying degrees of success. Generally, recruiting for the program was the responsibility of the local site supervisor, especially in multiple site projects. The short program schedule required most of the projects to conduct their recruiting within two to four weeks. This was too brief a period in some cases. Recruiting success varied considerably. Some sites had more qualified applicants than they could use, some just met their goal and some did not recruit their minimum number. Most early terminations occurred during pre-service orientation and within the first week of service.

Recruiting a broad age range of Summer Associates (not just college age students) provided a mix of maturity as well as enthusiasm for supporting site supervisors. In several instances, older Associates took on supervisory roles for their younger counterparts and assisted the sponsors in managing the sudden influx of resources.

### **Training**

We observed that training was an area that needed greater attention. The data in Chapter Two indicated that all projects had provided training in addition to the pre-service orientation. In some sites we did observe specialized skill training that was tailored for the assignment. In the majority of projects we visited, we observed limited training beyond that of the initial pre-service orientation.

Several sites dealt with skill training through regular staff meetings, with varying success. Most of the Associates learned what additional skills they needed informally -- on the job, from supervisors as needed or from other Associates. Associates in Detroit and Seattle requested a mid-term conference to promote greater *esprit de corps* among the Associates and enable them to share their experiences.

## Chapter Three: Site Visit Findings

### Associate Work Roles

The majority of Associates worked in the provision of direct service to the community. These tasks included counseling, tutoring, community outreach, office work, conducting surveys and construction. Some Associates worked in more indirect roles, such as developing new programs, recruiting clients, raising funds, and performing public relations activities. Sponsors stressed that they were delighted in being able to use Associates to work directly with clients, in contrast with the more indirect roles of VISTA Volunteers.

Associates worked in large and small teams as well as individual assignments. Since clusters of Associates were assigned to projects, the Associates frequently worked in teams to accomplish their tasks. The Denver Habitat site handled the influx of twenty Associates by dividing them into five teams, each with a supervisor. Working in teams appeared to have a synergistic effect on the Associates in most project settings, bringing out the better elements of individuals thrown together to accomplish a common goal. The Habitat sites were particularly effective in their use of the teams.

One Associate in Denver observed, "Working in a group is a neat experience. . . .The group works well together. We all learn from each other." Another Associate in Memphis noted, "When the going got tough, I remembered that this is not an individualistic attempt to receive personal recognition...this is a team effort." An Associate in Phoenix wrote in a journal, "Although the Summer Associates are so different, I am constantly amazed at how much these people have to offer. All of them treat each other with respect and I cannot recall a time when someone refused to help someone else."

We observed that teams of two to three worked well in projects, as did groups of four to six. Teams larger than this appeared unwieldy and less amenable to completing their tasks. Invariably, as teams became too large, some individual volunteers did not perform their share of the work and other group members had to compensate for their inaction. We also observed feelings of isolation when Associates worked alone. We did not observe this at sites with more than one Associate.

### Supervision and Work Environment

The number of Associates at workstations we visited ranged from one to 49. In some instances, too many Associates were placed at a site. This was the case at one Texas site where the manager was relatively inexperienced and there was a relatively high attrition rate among the Associates. At one Colorado site, five Summer Associates, one VISTA Volunteer and one supervisor worked in one small room with a desk and two tables.

In some cases supervisors accepted more Associates than they wanted due to repeated requests from state program offices to place more Associates. In a few instances supervisors did not possess sufficient supervisory capability to manage their Summer Associates. These infrequent cases occurred in projects with multiple sites where direct project supervisory authority was limited or unavailable.

### **Role of VISTA Volunteers**

VISTA originally envisioned that VISTA Volunteers would serve as non-supervisory mentors to the Summer Associates. Mentoring by VISTA Volunteers did not occur at most sites. During the site visits we found relatively few examples of mentoring activity. Usually, there was limited direct contact between VISTA Volunteers and Summer Associates. Where there was contact, VISTA Volunteers primarily served in supervisory or coordinating roles.

## **PROGRAM ADMINISTRATION**

### **Workload**

While the program and its flexibility were well-received by the sponsors and state program offices, the sponsors needed additional administrative help to respond quickly to the demands of this program. Sponsors and site supervisors stated that much of their other work was unattended as staff spent the majority of their time on the Summer Associates program. Management of the influx of Associates in such a short period of time demanded considerable attention on their part.

In West Memphis, the project supervisor said, "I am delighted with being able to have these Associates with us this summer but I also found myself laying awake nights figuring out how to keep them busy." A supervisor in Colorado said, "They have exhausted me, trying to keep six active and young minds focused and going forward." In many of the sites visited (for example Seattle, Waycross, Dallas, San Antonio, and Memphis), the supervisors had to focus most of their attention on the Summer Associates program or find alternatives for handling the additional administrative requirements of the program.

In San Antonio, the supervisor had several older Associates take over some of the administrative functions required to run the project. In some projects, VISTA Volunteers assisted the sponsors with supervision, training and assisting Summer Associates perform their duties. In most of the sites, the supervisors simply had to make the time available to manage and administer the program. This usually meant that they rearranged their priorities for the duration of the Associates' tour of service.

The ACTION state staff also worked many additional hours to make the Summer Associates program a success. Like the project supervisors, they frequently had to reshuffle their priorities to meet deadlines and complete required paperwork. While they were proud they were able to respond quickly to the needs of this program, they expressed a hope that next year they would have more time to design and plan their Summer Associates projects.

### **Administrative Concerns**

Project personnel as well as state program staff stated that there were too many disparate information requests from Washington, many of them redundant or trivial. Both groups suggested that these information requests be better coordinated in the future.

### Chapter Three: Site Visit Findings

Some supervisors expressed a need for more information and clarification on how to handle disciplinary problems, reassignment, or termination of Summer Associates. The operating assumption by most supervisors and ACTION state office staff was that the same rules and procedures for VISTA applied to the Summer Associates. The VISTA Handbook was distributed to most Associates during the pre-service orientations. Most of the Associates indicated they had not read this material or considered it relevant to their situation. Many supervisors and state office staff suggested that a Summer Associates Handbook be developed for Associates and project supervisors next year.

Additionally, some supervisors stated that the short duration of the program created several disciplinary problems. For example, ACTION did not allow the sponsors to replace Summer Associates if they left early or were terminated before the end of their service. Consequently, sponsors were reluctant to terminate Associates who did not perform satisfactorily. This led to resentment on the part of other Associates who worked diligently.

While the Associates on the whole were satisfied with the administration of the program, a few Associates expressed complaints. Some were confused about the amount of the local stipend and several complained about receiving their checks on time.

Despite some problem areas, the site visits confirmed the worth and success of the VISTA Summer Associates program. This is further documented in Chapter Four, Accomplishments and Outcomes.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### ACCOMPLISHMENTS AND OUTCOMES

A primary objective of the evaluation was to determine the program's accomplishments and outcomes. What had the projects accomplished? Were the Associates effective in their tasks? Would the supervisors be interested in the program in future years? Did the Associates feel the program was useful? What impact did the program have on the Associates? This chapter answers these questions.

#### PROGRAM ACCOMPLISHMENTS

##### Project Accomplishments

The supervisors reported that each project served an average of 394 persons in the communities. Tables 4.1 through 4.6 show summaries of the accomplishments of each of the thirty-three VISTA Summer Associates projects as reported by the supervisors. The tables indicate that project accomplishments were as diverse as the projects themselves. On the whole, the projects had substantial accomplishments over the short span of the program.

**TABLE 4.1**  
**ACCOMPLISHMENTS IN HEALTH AND NUTRITION**

The Texas Department of Health used 89 Summer Associates in a door-to-door campaign. Associates promoted free immunization clinics and WIC programs, educated parents and conducted immunization surveys. As a result, 104,889 children received immunizations in a two month period. In addition, there was an increase of 57,189 new participants in the WIC program, a 25 percent increase over the previous year.

In Scranton, Pennsylvania, ten Summer Associates canvassed 700 families in four low-income housing developments. The Associates served at the direction of the **Scranton Housing Authority**. These Associates personally interviewed 283 families. The Associates were able to document immunization information for 140 of these families. The knowledge gained in the screening interviews helped Associates refer 215 children to family physicians for shots.

At the **Greater Philadelphia Federation of Settlements in Pennsylvania**, ten Summer Associates actively promoted health education and primary care. As a result of their efforts, 7,200 families received basic printed information on immunizations. In part, this outreach took place in the five health fairs Summer Associates attended where their outreach contacted 3,250 people. In addition, the Summer Associates were able to inform 750 parents about upcoming immunizations for their children through the use of a computerized tracking system.

**TABLE 4.2**  
**ACCOMPLISHMENTS IN HOUSING AND HOMELESSNESS**

Through the efforts of 35 Summer Associates in **Denver, Colorado**, a **Habitat for Humanity** project secured more than \$60,000 worth of building materials and at least \$50,000 worth of labor from trade unions. The Summer Associates further accelerated the construction of 14 new homes. The Associates recruited volunteers, helped with construction activities, and improved automated office systems.

In **Miami, Florida**, 12 hurricane damaged homes received temporary roofs, the product of a **United Way** project supported by 15 VISTA Summer Associates. These Summer Associates also developed neighborhood support groups for over 150 people still living in Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) trailer parks. Another Miami project operated under the sponsorship of Habitat for Humanity with 15 Summer Associates. These participants helped in the coordination of outreach efforts, recruitment of volunteers and the construction of 41 homes for low-income families throughout the hurricane affected areas of South Dade County.

At the **Good Neighbor Love Center in Arkansas**, 55 Summer Associates recruited, organized and supervised volunteers to renovate four homes. They recruited 36 children from a housing development for a summer program. The Associates also developed a child nutrition plan and record-keeping system for 22 children in a child nutrition program. The Associates created a neighborhood housing resource center, a community families tool bank, and a resource directory for youth. In addition, Associates developed preventing pregnancy activities for teenage girls, and drug abuse prevention programs for the community. Finally, they successfully increased participation in boys and girls clubs in the community.

At the **Uptown Habitat for Humanity in Chicago, Illinois**, 30 Summer Associates helped complete 31 housing units for 70 families. They helped with construction, recruited and oriented volunteers, coordinated construction activities and communicated with likely donors.

At the **North Carolina Low-Income Housing Coalition in Raleigh, North Carolina**, 11 Summer Associates completed two monitoring reports for the National Housing Policy Initiative. These Associates also developed two public policy analyses of state spending on low-income housing.

Eight Summer Associates helped the **Habitat for Humanity of Rhode Island**. The Summer Associates aided in the rehabilitation of two houses, while working with construction crews on five new houses and a new triplex. In addition to construction, they centralized Habitat's information gathering and storage, organized warehouse materials, translated a homeowner's manual into Spanish and printed tickets and collected money for a fund raising event.

TABLE 4.2 (CONTINUED)  
ACCOMPLISHMENTS IN HOUSING AND HOMELESSNESS

At the **Essex County Department of Citizen Services in New Jersey**, 15 Summer Associates worked in a day camp that served 350 homeless children who lived with their families in shelters. They recruited the children into the day camp and provided tutoring, counseling, personal hygiene, socialization and recreation activities.

At the **Black Veterans for Social Justice in Brooklyn, New York**, 11 Summer Associates contacted fifty homeless families and provided outreach services to 40 youth living in shelters. They researched the housing market and gave housing information to 150 shelter residents, 35 of whom followed up with area realtors.

Eighteen Associates worked through the **United Way of Greater Memphis in Memphis, Tennessee**. They conducted a housing survey in a neighborhood, completing 50 surveys. They completed a directory of services for housing programs, distributed 200 flyers and directly helped 100 families obtain assistance. The Associates interviewed ten resident managers and social workers about rent assisted housing, organized a steering committee of eight persons and participated in 4 issue related support groups. They recruited seven college students to provide service in a tutorial program, organized two social activities for 275 residents at three public housing units and developed publicity for 1,000 people participating in a three day event. Additionally, they created a mailing list, established files for correspondence, and kept records. They planned and led three activities to attract visually impaired people, contacting 200 people and 45 doctors; as a result, 32 visually impaired people attended activities. They assisted a local agency distribute 15,300 pounds of produce. Associates redesigned a produce access plan that improved the delivery of fruits and vegetables to 150 agencies. These agencies ran soup kitchens, halfway houses, senior and day care centers. They developed new forms to monitor produce movement in the warehouse and promoted a call-in system for produce orders that 25 agencies now use. They designed and produced a hand-out with storage and preparation tips for 270 seniors and 1,717 housing developments residents.

TABLE 4.3  
ACCOMPLISHMENTS WITH YOUTH

The **Archway Programs of Atco, New Jersey** enrolled 15 Summer Associates for service in a summer day camp. The program enabled the camp to reach 450 low-income children who were either at risk of drug and alcohol abuse or developmentally disabled. These Associates provided needed recreation, education, and mentoring for children who might have otherwise faced a bleak summer.

In the **Bronx, New York, the Highbridge Community Life Center** used 11 Summer Associates to aid 125 children in a summer camp. The Bronx Associates also worked to enroll 100 persons in literacy classes. As an extra benefit, the Associates helped 150 people by organizing a clothing bank.

In **Los Angeles, California**, 12 Summer Associates worked with the **Los Angeles County 4-H Development Fund** to provide summer activities to 300 needy youth who live in seven public housing developments. The Associates provided homework counseling, conducted recreation and supervised arts and crafts activities. They planned, developed and conducted activities to enhance the 4-H clubs. They also helped the 4-H clubs with fund raising efforts by contacting local businesses to sponsor recreational outings and supply materials to the club activities.

In **Detroit Michigan**, 40 Summer Associates worked with seven community projects through the **Warren/Conner Development Coalition**. The Associates recruited over 200 families for special projects in low-income neighborhoods. They organized a block club of 80 residents. They organized and assisted in administering counseling sessions for 45 pregnant teenagers. Over 55 children received tutoring in math and reading. They worked on three different surveys--one of 300 industrial employers, and two community surveys of over 200 families focusing on health, nutrition, and social service. They produced three different newsletters and produced a community play focusing on "beyond violence." They assisted in the organization of a community fair involving over 300 children and a Hispanic festival which had 60 organizations and businesses represented. One Associate developed a program of mutual assistance between Catholic churches in need of products and services and local, minority businesses that could supply those products and services.

Sixty Summer Associates worked in 23 community organizations in **Seattle, Washington** under the auspices of the **Fremont Public Association**. Twenty-eight Associates worked in youth programs by assisting in creating and implementing tutorial and supervised recreational activities for the following at-risk youth: runaway youth, children in public housing, homeless children and neighborhood youth. Six Associates worked directly with at-risk youth providing employment services, leadership and educational training, and recruiting for the Big Sister program. Eleven Associates worked at promoting health and drug prevention services. They distributed AIDS information to the community, trained high school students to be substance abuse prevention leaders, provided prevention activities for youth and maintained supportive services to recovering addicts. Six Associates worked to develop a farmers' market, worked with food banks, coordinated food drives and planned fundraising events. Four Associates worked with homeless families to educate them about available services and provided supportive services to teen parents through tutoring and job and housing searches. Four Associates worked in day-care settings and in housing development projects.

**TABLE 4.4**  
**ACCOMPLISHMENTS IN EDUCATION**

The **Housing Authority in Greenville, South Carolina**, used the Summer of Service to place 19 Summer Associates in a literacy program. These Associates tutored 360 at-risk youth in language, math, and building self-esteem. In addition, the Associates reached across the generations to train 16 parents in promoting self-esteem training. Also, Associates worked with 24 grandparents to use stories to boost their grandchildren's interest in learning.

In Arizona, 11 Summer Associates worked under the direction of the **Literacy Volunteers of Maricopa County in Phoenix**. The Associates provided needed administrative support by computerizing and updating the project's data base of 500 tutors and students. Using computers gave the literacy program the capacity for rapid response to public inquiries, student and tutor needs. They provided support for interviews, testing and placement activities. When not at the computer terminals, the Associates were setting up 14 literacy information booths and putting together 600 packets of literacy tutor training materials.

**Concerted Services of Waycross, Georgia** applied 12 Summer Associates to the task of processing applications from families applying for Head Start. The Associates handled 598 families' applications, screened 500 children, and interviewed 362 parents.

At the **Literacy Volunteers of America in Connecticut**, 30 Summer Associates provided literacy training in three cities. In Enfield, ten Associates started a literacy program that provided ESL training to five persons, basic reading education to 30 clients and training in Braille reading to one visually impaired person. In Bridgeport nine Summer Associates recruited and placed in a literacy program 33 low-income families living in shelters. They provided literacy tutoring to 57 low-income adults and youth. At New Haven, Associates worked in two literacy programs. They recruited and provided counseling and supervision for 45 youth and assisted in the development of the program. They developed a story reading literacy program for children, interviewed 25 parents and matched 45 students and tutors. They conducted outreach activities to recruit the learners and the tutors.

At the **YMCA of Metropolitan Atlanta in Atlanta, Georgia**, 12 Summer Associates provided literacy training to 250 low-income, at-risk children in housing authorities. The Associates worked in day camps to provide tutoring in reading and math. They also provided training in violence prevention and how to gain employment.

Thirty Summer Associates set up and conducted new classes in basic English and Spanish literacy and ESL for 333 non-literate and non-English speaking adults through **California Literacy in Los Angeles, California**. The Associates developed two new programs that began tutoring services.

**TABLE 4.4 (CONTINUED)**  
**ACCOMPLISHMENTS IN EDUCATION**

At the **Bedford Stuyvesant Restoration Corporation in Brooklyn, New York**, ten Summer Associates developed six community service projects for low-income youth aged 6 -13. The Associates trained 60 youth who then carried out a service project on their own. The VISTA Summer Associates also provided twelve 90-minute academic tutorials to the 60 youth.

At **Project Read in Newark, New Jersey**, ten Summer Associates tutored 50 adults who read below the 5th grade level. They recruited 25 clients and 20 community volunteers as tutors. They developed advertising materials for the program and collected and developed material suitable for three textbooks for tutoring the clients. They worked with a publisher to produce the textbooks after they left. Their tutoring included monitoring progress and testing the adult students. They also researched funding sources and wrote grants to support the project.

At the **Ohio Literacy Network in Ohio**, 20 Summer Associates worked in Columbus, Akron and Cleveland. They developed materials and provided GED and ESL training. Their clients included 450 refugees, drop outs and job corps participants. The Associates' recruitment efforts resulted in an 800 percent increase in volunteers. As other accomplishments, the Summer Associates provided preschool education to 25 preschool children and tutored 12 children in math, reading and grammar.

At the **Massachusetts Department of Education/Adult Education in Boston**, 31 Summer Associates served in seven adult education programs. They provided direct literacy training to 300 low-income families (parents and children). Associates developed supportive relationships with the families, and, as a result increased participation and attendance in the programs. They led educational and recreational field trips for 250 parents and children and introduced 70 families to their local libraries.

In **Baltimore, Maryland**, 15 Summer Associates worked at **The Door** to enroll 48 low-income families in an intergenerational literacy program. The Associates then monitored closely the participation of 30 families in a home program. They worked daily with 125 children aged 8 - 12 to provide training in reading, computer literacy and recreation. They met daily with six parents who participated in the on-site program. They raised \$6,000 to continue their project for an additional three weeks.

**TABLE 4.5**  
**ACCOMPLISHMENTS IN PUBLIC SAFETY**

Twelve VISTA Summer Associates in Sacramento, California, under the auspices of the **Child Abuse Prevention Council**, organized daily activities for at-risk children. At least 200 young people took part in the camp every day. In a related assignment, the Associates worked to make four apartment complexes drug free zones. They helped serve 10,000 lunches in a summer lunch program.

The **Northeast Arkansas Council on Family Violence in Jonesboro, Arkansas** used the Summer Associate program to open a shelter for mothers and children. Fifteen Associates renovated the facility, while providing supervised playtime for 15 children.

Ten Summer Associates in **Meridian, Mississippi** helped the **Meridian Housing Authority** with drug prevention education. The Associates encouraged organizations and professionals to provide specialized training, educational programs, and workshops. The Associates rated the needs of 305 low-income youth living in public housing and, as a result, 150 youth received cultural enrichment activities. Eleven children received First Step early childhood education and five families learned early childhood education techniques. The Associates created training materials on "Barriers to Employment" and distributed them to 1,270 low-income families.

**TABLE 4.6**  
**ACCOMPLISHMENTS IN THE ENVIRONMENT**

Serving in some of the poorest neighborhoods of **Philadelphia, Pennsylvania**, 20 Summer Associates worked for the **Energy Coordinating Agency**. The Associates worked in eleven community centers interviewing applicants for eligibility and services and assessing energy conservation needs. They then worked with a VISTA Volunteer and a staff member of the Energy Coordinating Agency to make the necessary repairs. They taught energy conservation courses for 60 families. Associates enrolled 450 low income families in energy conservation programs. In all, these Associates reached 10,000 people with conservation awareness activities.

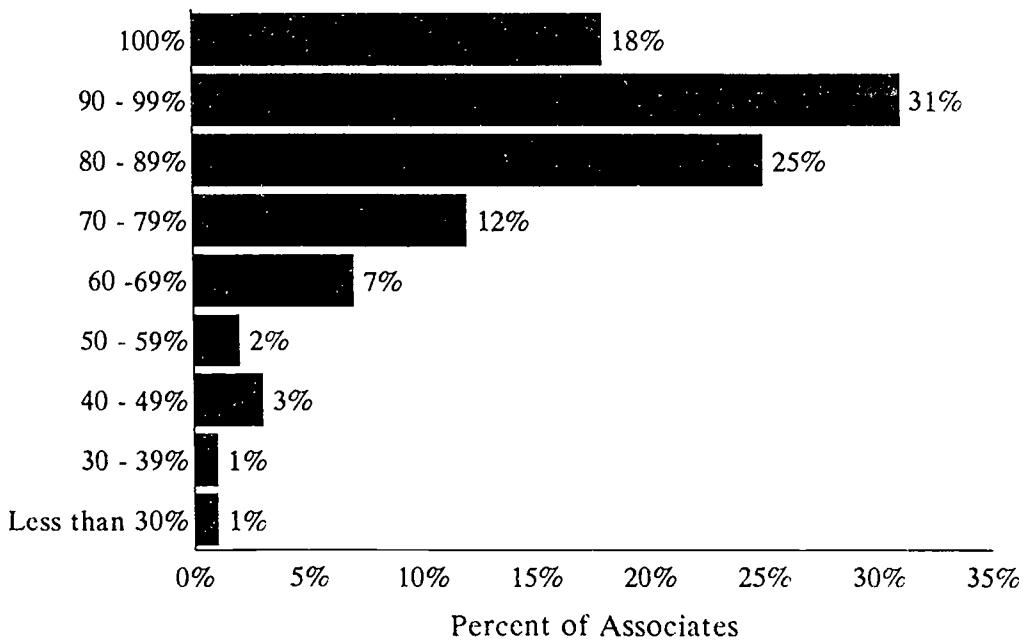
### Task Completion

At the end of the summer, we asked the Summer Associates to estimate the percentage of objectives and tasks they accomplished. The Summer Associates estimated they had completed an average of 89% of their objectives and tasks. Figure 4.1 shows that almost half of the Associates said they completed at least 90% of their tasks and almost three quarters completed at least 80%.

The supervisors verified the Associates' ratings of their task completion on ratings of the Associates' success on each task. The overall average rating was 8.9 on an eleven-point scale where 0 meant complete failure and 10 meant complete success.

**FIGURE 4.1**  
**COMPLETION OF OBJECTIVES AND TASKS**  
Associate Estimates of Objective and Task Completion

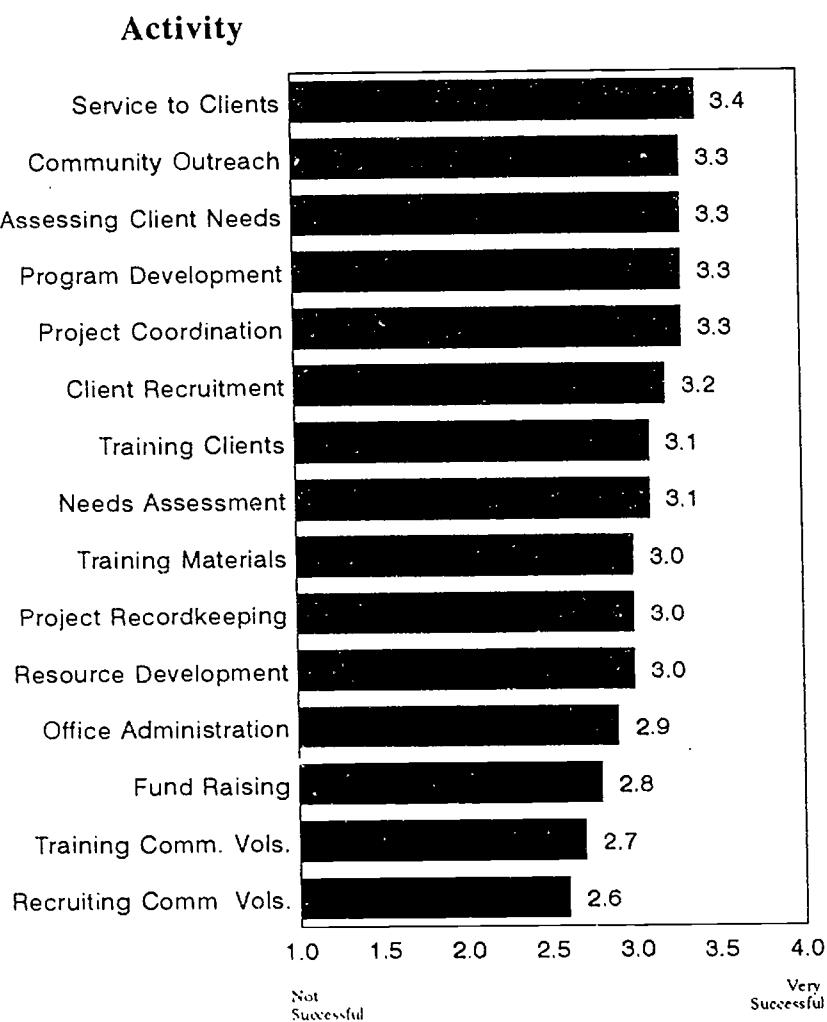
#### Task Completion Level



### Success of the Associates' Activities

The supervisors rated most of the Associate's activities as successful. The supervisors rated the success of fifteen activities on a four-point scale where 1 meant "not successful" and 4 meant "very successful" (Figure 4.2). The supervisors rated service to clients (3.4 rating) as the most successful activity. Four other activities ranked just below the top category with a 3.3 rating: community outreach, assessing client needs, program development, and project coordination. The lowest rated activities were: recruiting community volunteers (2.6), training community volunteers (2.7), and fundraising (2.8).

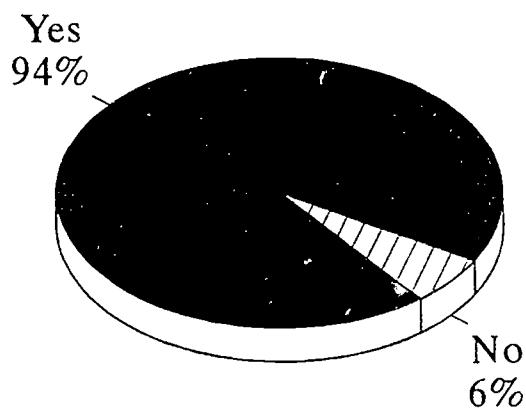
**FIGURE 4.2**  
**SUCCESS OF ASSOCIATE ACTIVITIES**  
 Supervisors Rate the Associates on Level of Success



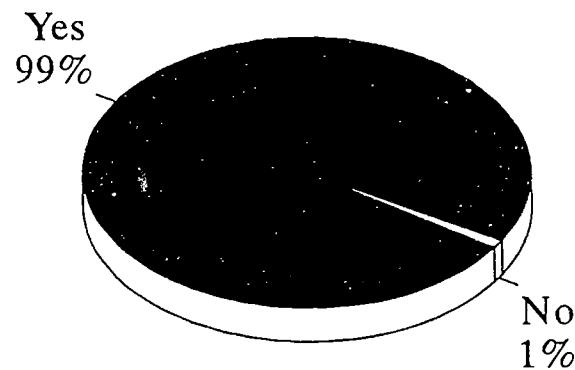
## Chapter Four: Accomplishments and Outcomes

From the supervisor's perspective, the VISTA Summer Associates program was successful. Figure 4.3 shows that almost all (94%) of the supervisors felt that Summer Associates were cost effective. Even more supervisors (99%) said that they would have a Summer Associates program next year.

### FIGURE 4.3 SUPERVISOR OPINIONS ON SUMMER ASSOCIATES



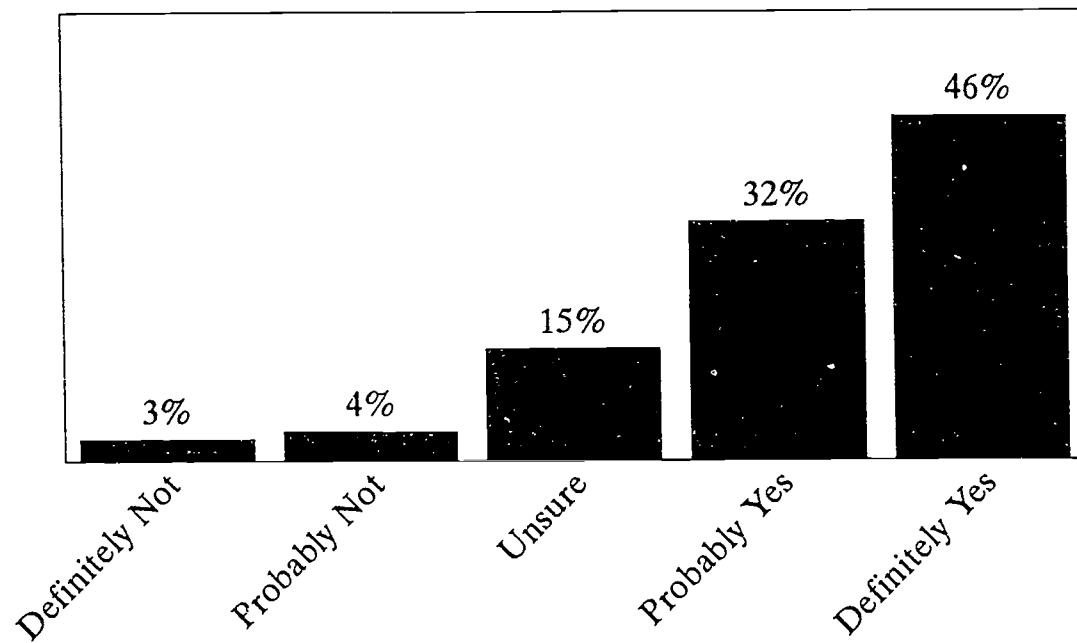
Are Summer Associates  
Cost Effective?



Would You Have a Summer  
Associates Program Next Year?

Similarly, the majority of Associates felt they would choose to become an Associate again. Figure 4.4 shows that 46 percent of the Associates indicated they definitely would and another 32 percent probably would. Fifteen percent were undecided. Just 7% indicated that they probably would not become an Associate again.

**FIGURE 4.4**  
**WOULD YOU CHOOSE TO BECOME A SUMMER ASSOCIATE AGAIN?**



#### EFFECTS ON THE ASSOCIATES

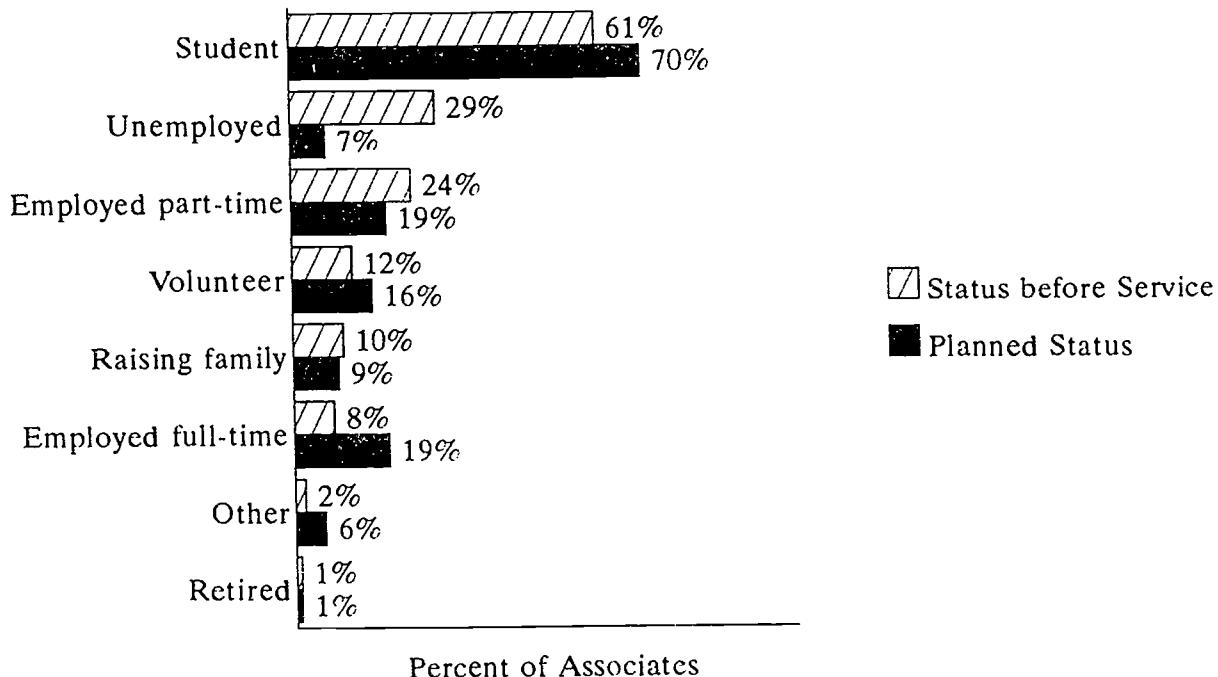
##### Prior Activities and Plans of the Summer Associates

We asked the Associates what they had been doing when they began service and what they planned to do when they completed service. Sixty-one percent of the Associates completing both pre-service and post-service questionnaires were students when they applied for the program. The next most common status (shown in Figure 4.5) was unemployed (29%), followed by employed part-time (24%). Twelve percent was serving as volunteers and 10% was raising a family. We showed here just the responses for the 515 Associates who completed both pre-service and post-service questionnaires. The percentages for all 719 Associates who completed only the pre-service questionnaire were similar.

## Chapter Four: Accomplishments and Outcomes

At the end of the summer, a number of Associates planned to change their status. The largest change (a decrease of 22 percentage points) came from the unemployed category. The number intending to attend school increased nine points (from 61 percent to 70 percent), and the employed full-time category increased eleven points (from 8% to 19%). The number intending to volunteer increased slightly (four percentage points from 12% to 16%). These data indicate that many Associates who were unemployed before service now intended to become employed full-time or go back to school.

**FIGURE 4.5**  
**PRIOR ACTIVITIES AND PLANS**



Percents total more than 100% due to multiple activities and plans.

### Impact on the Associates

The supervisors rated the degree of change they observed in the Summer Associates over the summer. The two highest ranked areas of change (Figure 4.6) were in the Associates' ability to work with clients and their self-esteem. The third highest area was in personal maturity. The supervisors rated all eight areas as showing improvement.

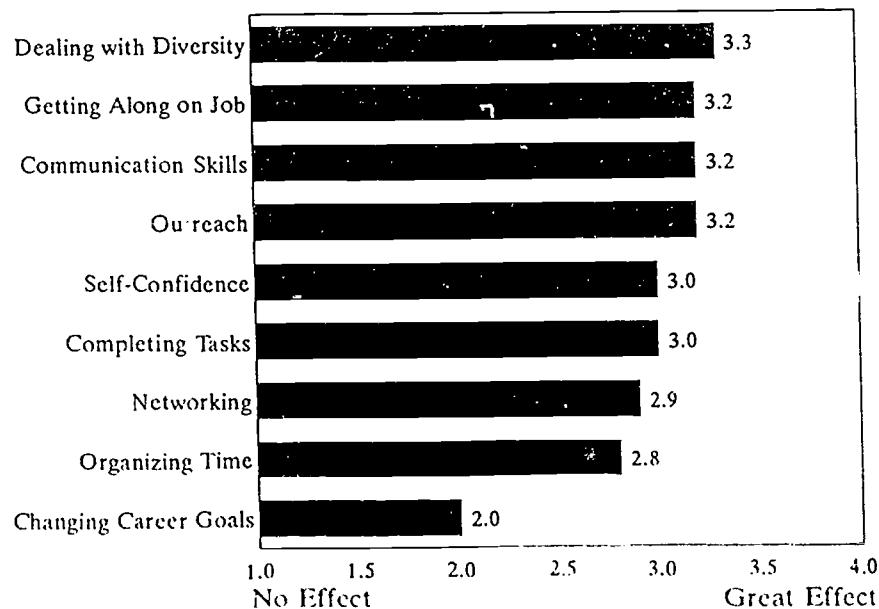
**FIGURE 4.6**  
**SUPERVISOR RATINGS OF CHANGES IN ASSOCIATES**

**Area of Potential Change**



**FIGURE 4.7**  
**ASSOCIATE ASSESSMENT OF IMPACT ON SELF**

**Areas of Impact on Self**



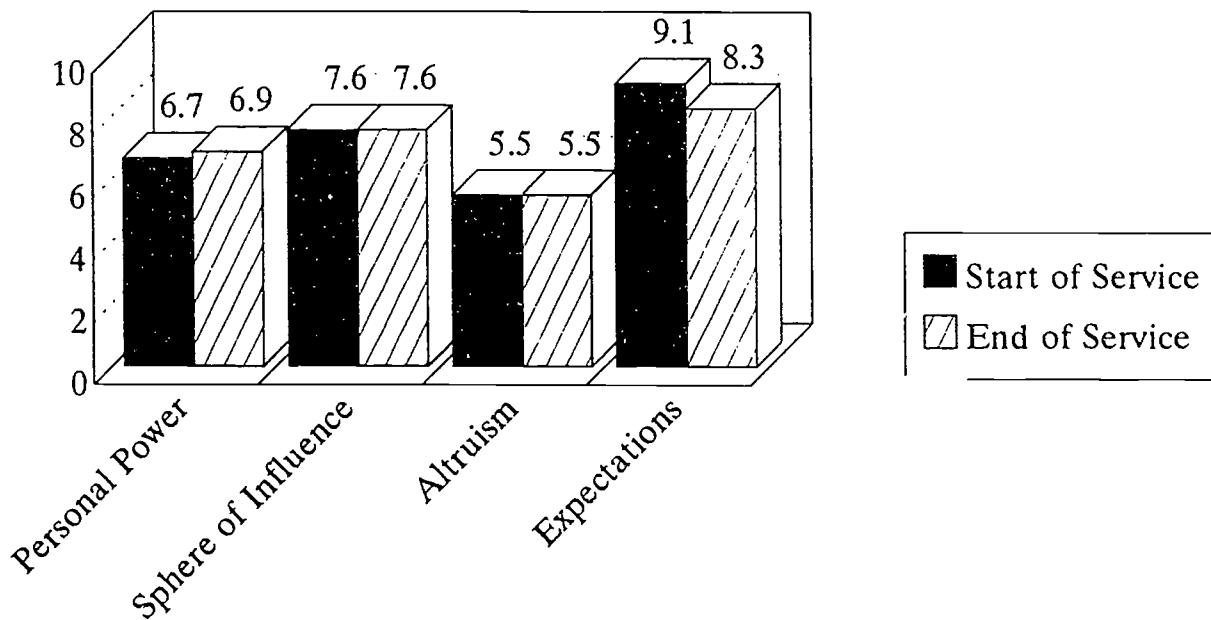
## Chapter Four: Accomplishments and Outcomes

We also asked the Associates to rate the impact service had on them in nine areas (Figure 4.7). The Associates rated the highest impact (3.3 on a four-point scale) as their ability to deal with diversity, that is, the ability to interact with people from different backgrounds. They also rated highly the impact on their ability to get along with supervisors and co-workers on the job (3.2), their communication skills (3.2), and outreach (3.2).

The Associates rated the area of lowest impact as change in career goals (2.0). This was the only category to receive a rating on the "no effect" side of the scale. This further explains the data in Figure 4.5. Figure 4.5 showed that many Associates planned changes in their status after their service. That is, most of those who had been unemployed before service now planned to seek jobs or return to school. While many Associates planned changes in their career *status* as a result of their service, they did not plan changes in their career *goals*.

In both the pre-service and post-service questionnaires we asked the Summer Associates a series of questions that make up four scales -- three standard social-psychological scales and one scale constructed solely for this study. The first of the standard scales is the Power Scale that measures one's sense of control over events in one's life. The second is the Sphere of Influence Scale that measures one's perceptions about one's ability to influence events. The third is the Altruism Scale that measures concern for the welfare of others. The new scale designed for this study is the Expectation Scale measuring the extent to which the Associates' expectations on personal skill development were met.

**FIGURE 4.8**  
**ATTITUDE AND VALUE CHANGES**  
Associate Scale Ratings



N = 513 Associates; Scale: 0=lowest possible score; 10=highest possible score

Figure 4.8 displays the pre-service and post-service scores on each scale. In the eight to ten weeks of service, the Associates showed a slight increase in the Power Scale, no change in Sphere of Influence or Altruism, and a decrease in the meeting of skill Expectations. These results indicate that the program may have had a mild positive effect on ratings on the Power Scale. That is, the Associates felt somewhat more control over events in their lives at the end of the summer than they did at the beginning. The stability of the Sphere of Influence or Altruism scales may mean that the program had no effect on these personality attributes. The decrease on the Expectations scale may mean that most Associates felt that their expectations about skill development were not met.

There are several competing explanations for the modest positive change in one standard scale and no change in two standard scales. The first is the program was too short to have much effect on attitudes. That is, at least three and probably more months service may be needed to show change. The second is that personality attributes measured by these scales are fairly stable for the age groups serving in the program. The third is that the program has minimal or no effect in these areas. This can be explored in future evaluations.

The decrease in the Expectations Scale poses several challenges for the program. This scale asked pre-service and post-service questions about the skills learned in this program: to assist in future employment, to serve community, to encourage person to volunteer again, and leadership capabilities. The Associates were least likely to be satisfied about learning skills that would help them develop new programs to serve their community. If these are important results for the program, then increased training or attention to them may be needed. VISTA may want to address unrealistic expectations the Associates may have about the program during pre-service orientation and examine its recruiting message to insure that expectations are not raised unrealistically high.

Although the majority of Associates did not show much change on their scale scores, some Associates had substantial positive changes on one or more of the scales. Analysis revealed that two factors, were related to change on two or more scales (Table 4.7). These two factors were effective supervisor ratings in outreach and believing that training was useful. Those Associates whose supervisors rated them as effective in outreach activities were more likely to have positive personal changes on all four scales. This indicates that serving in outreach activities such as public education, canvassing neighborhoods and distribution of flyers may have beneficial effects on the Associates, especially if the Associates were effective.

Believing that training was useful was related to positive changes on two scales: Personal Power and Expectations. This indicates that good training for the Associates is important for their own personal development, as well as their being able to serve effectively.

Other factors appeared related to one scale. For example, whites were more likely than minorities to have exceeded their Expectations of skill development. Whites who served African American communities were more likely to have exceeded their Expectations. Associates working with youth were more likely to have positive changes in the Sphere of Influence scale. Associates who had high household incomes and who served poverty communities were more likely to have positive changes in Altruism.

**TABLE 4.7**  
**FACTORS RELATED TO POSITIVE ATTITUDINAL CHANGE**

Type of Change	Factor Associated with the Change
Positive change in Personal Power	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Those who believed that their training was useful were more likely to have positive changes in Personal Power.</li> <li>○ When supervisors rated Associates effective in outreach, assessing client needs and program development, Associates were more likely to have positive changes in Personal Power.</li> </ul>
Positive change in Sphere of Influence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ When Associates worked with youth, Associates were more likely to have positive changes in Sphere of Influence.</li> <li>○ When supervisors rated Associates effective in outreach and recordkeeping, Associates were more likely to have positive changes in Sphere of Influence.</li> </ul>
Positive change in Altruism	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Those who joining the program for a service-related reason were more likely to have increases in Altruism.</li> <li>○ When supervisors rated Associates effective in people-related tasks, Associates were more likely to have positive changes in Altruism.</li> <li>○ Persons with high household incomes who served poverty communities were more likely to have positive changes in Altruism.</li> </ul>
Positive change in Expectations of Personal Skill Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Those who believed that their training was useful were more likely to have exceeded their Expectations</li> <li>○ Whites were more likely than minorities to have exceeded their Expectations.</li> <li>○ Associates who were effective in outreach were more likely to have exceeded their Expectations.</li> <li>○ Whites who served African American communities were more likely to have exceeded their Expectations.</li> </ul>

## CHAPTER FIVE

### CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This evaluation focused on the VISTA Summer Associates and their workstations, activities and accomplishments. Chapter One provided an overview of the program, its development, the VISTA Summer Associates projects and the evaluation. Chapter Two described the Summer Associates, their activities and their beneficiaries. Chapter Three presented findings from site visits to projects. Chapter Four examined program accomplishments and effects of the program on the Associates. This chapter presents conclusions and recommendations.

#### CONCLUSIONS

**VISTA Summer Associates expanded the capacity of non-profit and public sponsors to provide service to low-income communities.**

The Summer Associates completed 89 percent of their work tasks. The tasks rated the most successful were in the areas of service to clients, community outreach, assessing client needs, program development, and project coordination. The presence of one or more Associates at a workstation for a minimum of eight weeks allowed sponsors to expand their services to more people and offer new services and activities. The workstations served an average number of 200 persons, and the projects served an average number of 698 persons.

**VISTA Summer Associates gained considerable personal benefits from their service experience.**

Most of the Associates were pleased with what they learned and accomplished. Many said they learned a lot about community service and serving other people. Lower income Associates viewed the program as a way to gain work experience and as a bridge to gaining full-time employment. Some Associates used their service to test a change in career goals, usually toward social service. Half of the Associates joined the program to help others, the community or society. Another fifth joined to work in a specific area, such as youth, homeless or literacy.

The program had little effect on decisions to change career goals; rather it reinforced already made decisions. The summer service did result in planned changes in career status: an increase in the number enrolled as students (61% of Associates increased to 70%), an increase in the number employed full-time (8% increased to 19%) and a decrease in the number unemployed (29% decreased to 7%).

The areas of largest change in the Associates as a result of the service was improved work skills (ability to work with clients, get along on the job, work with others from different backgrounds and perform community outreach), self-esteem, personal maturity and communication skills. A slight increase in the Associates' feelings of personal power occurred. There was no change in their feelings about their sphere of influence or altruism. Generally,

## **Chapter Five: Conclusions and Recommendations**

their expectations of new skill development were not met. Serving in community outreach activities such as public education, canvassing neighborhoods and distribution of flyers appeared to have a beneficial effect on the Associates in all four scale areas.

**The VISTA program structure of established non-profit and public sponsors was critical to successful implementation of the Summer Associates program.**

The VISTA Summer Associates performed a variety of community service activities for low-income beneficiaries in a wide range of geographic and social settings. The VISTA program structure enabled VISTA to work with existing VISTA sponsors to plan and carry out a complex new program with little lead time and few resources. The Associates served in 33 projects located in 21 states. Projects used a variety of approaches: single sites, single sponsors with multiple sites, umbrella organizations with multiple sites and statewide programs. Associates served in a variety of program areas, including immunization outreach, literacy tutoring, summer youth programs, house construction, energy conservation, counseling for homeless families and Head Start screening. The total direct cost of the program was \$1.2 million. The cost per Summer Associate to ACTION was \$1,709.

The majority of the projects were in urban areas. Seventy-three percent of the beneficiaries were at or below the poverty level. Fifty-two percent were below the age of 18 and 54 percent were African American. Fifty-eight percent were female. The four most common Associate activities were community outreach (23.6% of Associates), working with children (19.9%), general office work (18.5%) and house construction (14.4%).

**The organization of VISTA Summer Associates in small teams contributed to successful service.**

Working in teams of two to six had a positive effect on the Associates, bringing out the better elements of individuals working together to accomplish a common goal. Teams larger than this generally were unwieldy and less amenable to completing their assigned tasks. Feelings of isolation occurred when Associates worked alone at a site.

**The effectiveness of the recruitment of Summer Associates varied from project to project.**

Recruiting methods varied considerably from site to site with differing degrees of success. The three most successful recruiting methods were word-of-mouth (28% of projects), newspaper advertisements (17%) and local college campus recruitment (13%).

**The VISTA Summer Associates program included individuals from diverse racial, ethnic, educational, cultural and age backgrounds.**

Sixty-six percent of the Summer Associates were female and thirty-four percent male. Sixty-three percent were minority. Sixty-one percent were students, with the majority of these in college. Seventy-seven percent of the Associates had completed some college. The program included associates from all income levels, with approximately one-third having family incomes of \$10,000 or less, one third having incomes between \$10,001 and \$35,000, and one third

having incomes greater than \$35,000. The median age was 22 years. Twenty-five percent were aged 26 and older. Fifty-eight percent lived in the communities served and 42 percent did not.

**VISTA Summer Associates need more skills training during their period of service.**

Seventy-six percent of the supervisors said that the Associates needed additional training when they reported for service at their projects. Although all 33 projects provided some training, 28% of the Associates at the conclusion of service felt they still needed additional training. Most of the training conducted was informal -- on the job, from supervisors as needed, or from other Associates. Having effective training was important for the personal growth of the Associates in two areas: personal power and meeting their expectations.

**More lead time was needed to plan and implement the program.**

The uncertainty about funding shortened the time for the development and implementation of the program. This short lead time required the reordering of priorities for sponsors and ACTION state program staff, placing a tremendous workload burden on them.

**Ten to twelve weeks would be a better length of time for a program of summer service.**

Eight weeks was too short a period given the recruiting effort and the need for additional training. A ten to twelve week program would allow enough time for service and still allow Associates who are in school to serve during their summer break.

**Administrative guidelines for the program are in need of further development.**

Supervisors and Associates had questions about roles, discipline, procedures and pay that were not addressed by the VISTA handbook. The role of the VISTA Volunteers with the Summer Associates needs clarification. VISTA originally envisioned that VISTA Volunteers would be non-supervisory resources to assist the Summer Associates. This did not occur at most projects.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

- Adopt the VISTA Summer Associates program as a permanent program.
- Initiate future programs in sufficient time to allow sponsors and state program staff to plan, recruit Associates and implement the program.
- Develop an appropriate administrative handbook for the VISTA Summer Associates program.
- Determine guidelines for interaction between VISTA Volunteers and VISTA Summer Associates and include them in the handbook.
- Lengthen the VISTA Summer Associates program from eight - ten weeks to ten - twelve weeks.
- Require the sponsors to provide more skills training.
- Address unrealistically high expectations the Summer Associates might have during recruitment and pre-service orientation.